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The Despairing Optimist . . . . . .

RENÉ DUBOS

Shortly after I joined the staff of Harvard University Medical School in 1942, I was asked to serve on a search committee for a new chairman of the department of physiology. The problem was to find a successor for Walter Bradford Cannon, long the most illustrious American physiologist, who had finally decided to retire at the age of seventy-one. The members of the committee soon agreed that the candidate with the best scientific qualifications was Homer W. Smith, formerly of Cannon's department at Harvard and at that time professor of physiology at New York University. His name was rejected, however, on the grounds that his age might not give him enough time to create a strong department during his tenure of office. The new rules at Harvard made retirement compulsory at age sixty-five, and he was then forty-eight years old! The second candidate to be considered was a brilliant young physiologist then working independently as a recipient of a special fellowship. But his name also was discarded because he was only thirty years old and therefore not mature enough—so the committee felt—to be entrusted with large decision-making responsibilities affecting the future of a famous medical school department.

Walter B. Cannon was still a creative scholar and a forceful administrator in 1942, even though he was then past the official retirement age. Furthermore, he had become known as a creative scientist early in his life, during his mid-twenties, and was under thirty-five when he was appointed full professor of physiology at Harvard. These facts gave rise to my doubts about the significance of chronological age as a measure of scientists' ability to engage in creative work and to shoulder administrative responsibilities. These doubts were reinforced when I came to realize that Louis Pasteur made his first great scientific discovery at the age of twenty-two, and had proven a very effective dean of a new school of science at thirty-one. He was past sixty-three, as well as partially paralyzed, when he began to work out the theoretical principles and practical aspects of vaccination. I have since learned that many artists, politicians, and businessmen likewise became known for their achievements before the age of thirty, and continued to be productive long past middle age, both in their fields of specialization and in other social roles.

I do not see much evidence, therefore, that people between the ages of thirty and sixty are any more capable of creative work or of holding responsible positions than are younger or older adults. Yet there has been a trend in Western countries to postpone the age at which young people are allowed to play responsible and creative roles in important social activities—and simultaneously another trend to hasten the age of retirement. In my opinion, both these trends are biologically unjustified and socially destructive. They are an expression, not of the influence of chronological age on ability to function creatively and responsibly, but of the fact that our society does not know how to create enough adult roles for able people.

One unfortunate consequence of this state of affairs has been an artificial, nonbiological prolongation of adolescence, resulting in the

RENÉ DUBOS is professor emeritus at the Rockefeller University and is the author of *A God Within* and *Beast or Angel? Choices That Make Us Human.*

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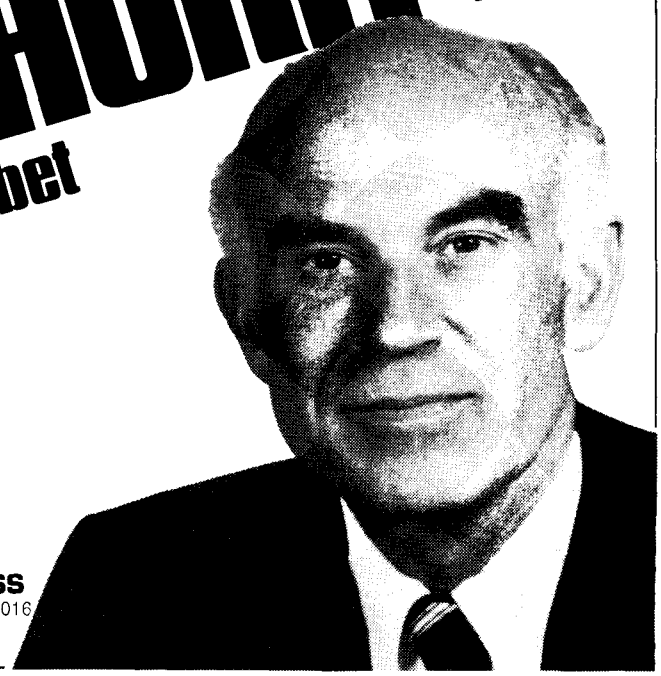

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creation of a post-teen-age, pre-adult phase of life for which there is no useful role in society as currently organized. Another deplorable consequence has been to deny a chance for creative social activities to older people who are still vigorous and capable of productive tasks but are compelled to accept retirement from active life, simply for reasons of bad social planning. I shall discuss later how our present social structures are thus responsible for wasting human potentialities at both ends of the life span—on the one hand, among young people who are fully developed and, on the other, among older people who are still potentially capable of productive activities.

Unemployment among teen-agers, especially in the black population, is one of the greatest tragedies of present-day life in the United States. It causes much human misery now, and will certainly aggravate social problems in the future. The reason I do not discuss this problem here is that its determinants are purely ethnic and economic, and therefore somewhat outside my theme, which is the relationship between chronological age and intellectual development.

In most parts of the world, especially in prosperous countries, most children and teen-agers are now developing biologically faster than they did several decades ago. This phenomenon is most obvious with regard to body size and sexual maturity. For example, most teen-agers are taller than their grandparents and parents: the age of first menstruation has been advanced by probably more than three to five years since the beginning of the century. It would be surprising if this acceleration of biological maturity were not accompanied by acceleration in the development of mental attributes. From many points of view, in any case, chronological age now has physiological and psychological connotations quite different from those it had in the past.

There is a painful paradox in the fact that, while young people are now developing faster than they used to, society tends to treat them as dependent children for a longer and longer time. Gone are the days when, in Europe and even more in this country, children were entrusted with chores at home, on the farm, or in the shop and thus had a chance to acquire early, by practice and observation, the confidence and the skills of adult life. In theory, teen-agers are now glorified, but in practice they are given little if any opportunity to act as responsible members of the adult community. Whereas in the past many persons in their twenties occupied positions of leadership in all walks of life, people are now regarded as still somewhat immature, and hence not quite dependable, almost until they have reached their thirties. This is just as true for plumbers as for lawyers and doctors; if present trends continue, the period of training will be longer than the period of performance and creativity.

The justification commonly given for prolonging the schooling and training period in our times is the greater complexity of the modern world: a person needs more knowledge and more experience than in the past in order to become really creative and socially responsible. I can only outline here some of my reasons for questioning the validity of this assumption.

While it is obvious that the amount of information has increased, most of it is now codified in the form of organized structures and of general laws that make knowledge more readily available and easier to comprehend. Furthermore, only a few people do not reach full development of their intellectual capabilities by the end of their teen years. From then on, most of them are as able as they will ever be to acquire the specific kinds of knowledge they will need to deal with particular problems. History shows ad nauseam that, in the arts, in the sciences, as well as in all other walks of life, innovative advances are just as likely to come from people in their early twenties, or even younger, as from people who have been active in particular fields for a long time.

The attributes denoted by the vague word *wisdom* are unquestionably an expression of experience, but there is no evidence that they are correlated with chronological age. In my opinion, they are acquired largely through the practice of taking responsibility, and in particular as a result of having to weigh the multiple factors that need to be considered in any choice or decision. One does not acquire experience by living longer, but by having to deal with complex situations. If young adults lack experience, it is not because they suffer

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from a kind of biologically determined immaturity, but chiefly because they have been denied occasions to acquire experience through the exercise of responsibility.

In the past, many great prophets and political rulers, many conquerors and legislators, as well as many artistic and scientific creators, were people in their twenties who would now be considered too young to hold responsible positions.

All events leave a practically permanent imprint on the bodies and minds of the participants; experience is made up of these lasting memories. Until recent times, most societies recognized a social value in such accumulated experience and gave moral authority to their elderly members. The wisdom associated with age was regarded as a valuable social asset. Modern societies, in contrast, no longer regard the wisdom acquired through the experiences of a long life as an asset of permanent value. The conditions of life change so rapidly, it is said, that the experience of the father is of little use to his son because the problems of the modern world are fundamentally unlike those of the past from which this experience was derived.

Although the opinion that experience gained in the past is not applicable to the present has been defended by eminent scholars, I question its validity. That ways of life are changing is obvious, but it is also obvious that the fundamental needs, limitations, potentialities, and aspirations of human beings remain much the same as they have been for thousands of years. The experience of the father may not be of much use to his son in designing new kinds of engines for aircraft, but it is very relevant to the reasons why people want to travel by aircraft and to the kind of service they demand. Experience is still a valuable asset in our society wherever human behavior is involved—which means in most of what we do and what we experience.

In the course of the aging process under various social conditions, certain biological and psychological factors clearly affect the quality and usefulness of experience. Aging inevitably brings about organic and behavioral changes, some of which are obvious and others hidden; in particular, it progressively weakens the physiological drive that motivates and activates people during early adulthood. Indolence commonly develops—along with an indisposition, and perhaps some fundamental organic loss of ability—to learn new ways, to accept new attitudes, and especially to take on new responsibilities. In all professional persons, there is a general trend for productiveness to fall off past the age of fifty; this trend provides a seemingly physiological basis for the common practice of compulsory retirement at some arbitrarily set age.

Because of practical administrative necessities, it is probably reasonable and perhaps indispensable to make retirement compulsory at a fixed chronological age, but the choice of this age is influenced more by social considerations than by biological imperatives. There is, first, the well-recognized fact that chronological age does not rigidly determine physiological age and therefore does not constitute a good criterion of ability to function—physically or mentally, individually or socially. Of even greater importance is the fact that the operation of mental faculties is largely independent of ordinary biological vigor. As long as the vascular bed and physiological functions remain capable of supplying the brain with all the oxygen and the sugar it needs, the clarity of mental processes is preserved, and the person can continue a fairly normal range of personal and social activities.

History is indeed replete with examples of persons who remained productive and effective until a late chronological age, even after their physical health had begun to deteriorate. Cervantes completed the second part of *Don Quixote* when he was sixty-eight. Goethe's second *Faust* was written in his eighties. Henry James wrote the famous novels of his "major phase" between the ages of sixty and seventy-three. Contrary to what is generally stated, many scientists also have made fundamental contributions in their later years. William Harvey published *De Generationes* at age seventy-three, and I could produce a long list of contemporary biologists who discovered important scientific facts and laws in their sixties, seventies, and even eighties. Suffice it to mention here the case of Oswald T. Avery, under whom I worked at the Rockefeller Institute. He established the role of DNA in the transmission of hereditary

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characteristics after his official retirement age, at a time when he appeared so frail that many of his colleagues believed, and said, that he had shot his bolt. Naturally, much of the work that led to Avery's monumental scientific achievement of his later years was carried out by some of his younger colleagues who were more familiar than he was with modern theories and techniques. Yet it was he who elected to focus the efforts of his laboratory on the transmission of hereditary characteristics and who contributed the experience and the continuity essential to the solution of the problem.

The names of Georges Clemenceau for the First World War and of Winston Churchill for the Second World War are sufficient to illustrate that nations have often depended on chronologically old men for the arduous tasks of political leadership during critical periods in their history. In fact, the same remark applies to more technical aspects of leadership. During the Second World War, many of the most important commanding officers of the American army and navy were in their sixties; Henry L. Stimson was seventy-seven when he became secretary of war.

The case of the Supreme Court justices is of special interest, not only because it provides many examples of old men who remained professionally active late in life, but also because it demonstrates that the desire for continued professional activity can be independent of financial rewards. Justices are permitted to retire from the bench at seventy, after ten years of service, and receive their full salary until the end of their lives. Very few of them, however, have taken advantage of this clause in their contracts. In fact, most of them have elected to stay on the bench way past seventy—indeed, into their eighties and nineties and often until death.

It is probable that, like the Supreme Court justices, many retired people in all walks of life would prefer to continue as long as possible some form of socially useful activity. A recent survey of "senior citizens" in Sweden gave results that could probably be duplicated in the United States and in other prosperous countries of Western civilization. In Sweden, persons over sixty-seven years of age now account for almost 20 percent of the total population and most of them are retired. When these retired people were interviewed, the prime wish they expressed was for conditions that would enable them to remain as active as possible in body and in mind; opportunities for travel and for engaging in handicrafts rated high among their requests. In fact, the local administrations of many Swedish communities provide senior citizens with elaborate programs of entertainment, such as travel to other cities, visits to museums, theaters, and movies, education in languages, dances, and various kinds of hobby work. Granted the usefulness of such programs, they have not yet been proven to be an adequate substitute for activities that allow a person to contribute to the life and welfare of the community.

In a profound way, there is some analogy between the biological and psychological needs of people at both ends of life. In the case of old people as well as of young people, the social significance of the occupation is probably more important than simply being occupied.

The development of biological and mental faculties is conditioned by their use during the early stages of life; similarly the maintenance of these faculties depends upon their continued use during the later stages of life. The validity of the ancient dictum "Use it or lose it" has been recently confirmed by a biomedical investigation. Dr. Alexander Leaf, professor of medicine at Harvard University, studied people of three agrarian societies characterized by unusual longevity, great vigor even in old age, and remarkable freedom from chronic diseases.

These three societies have very different ways of life because they belong to entirely different ethnic and cultural groups. One is located in Hunza, on the borders of China and Afghanistan; one in the Soviet Republic of Georgia; and one in Vilcabamba, Ecuador. Despite ethnic and cultural differences, however, these three agrarian societies have a few characteristics in common. In all three, people have an extremely frugal diet, they engage regularly in vigorous physical work, and they are expected to play an active role in the affairs of their communities from early in life

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almost to its end. This latter role changes, of course, with age, but instead of degenerating into retirement spiced with entertainment, people remain socially productive and useful.

Frugality, continued physical activity, and the practice of engaging in socially useful tasks throughout life certainly contribute to the longevity of these people, as well as to their vigor and freedom from disease. Modern societies, in contrast, are moving further and further away from these characteristics, creating a situation in which the young and the old alike are more and more deprived of important social roles. In many cases, I realize, progressively removing them from the productive stream of social life is the consequence of generous intentions—such as restricting the labor market to adults who are in the heaviest period of familial responsibilities; giving young people a chance for a more extensive, or at least more prolonged, education; and allowing older people more time to enjoy leisure at the end of a laborious life. But I believe that these motives, though good in theory, commonly misfire in practice. They cause a wasting of life at both ends and generate dangerous situations for the future.

I am aware of the economic and administrative difficulties involved in reintegrating young and retired people into a more socially useful life. I know too that our society cannot return to the agrarian ways of life studied by Dr. Alexander Leaf. The problem demands the formulation of new priorities based on the view that economic criteria should be subservient to the expression of human potentialities, instead of the other way around. We need social innovations to deal with the fact that there is more to human life than health, education, entertainment, and leisure. Whether rich or poor, young or old, weak or strong, all people desire to be needed, recognized, and valued.

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Life and Letters

The Opinionated Librarian

ARISTIDES

A bookish person, I live, naturally enough, surrounded by books. Bookcases are in my living room, in my hallways, in my dining room; in my bedroom stand five unmatched bookcases, not only jammed full but spilling over, with books and magazines lined up atop them. Books do furnish a room, as the saying goes, but at my place they bid fair to take over the joint. The mailman groans under the load of my purchases from Marboro, Blackwells, Strand, and various publishers. One morning I expect to wake up, walk into my bathroom, and find written in shaving cream on the mirror, in the style of the old maniac-killer movies, "Stop Me Before I Buy More Books." To prevent this happening, I made what for me is a radical decision: to trim down my personal library. Although I did not know it when I first set out to do this, I was engaged in a task of the most intimate literary criticism.

I recall a conversation I had some years ago with a man who has a reputation for living simply. He is an engineer by training, a photographer by interest, and, though not bookish, very intelligent about the books he does read. We talked about a book he had just read. I do not remember its title, but the book had recently come out, so he could only have read it in a cloth edition. He made it sound most interesting, and so I asked him if he would let me have a look at it. "Oh," he said, "I am afraid that after finishing it I threw it in the garbage." Stunned does not begin to describe my reaction to this act. For days afterward I rolled it around in my head, trying to get it straight. He had bought a new book in a cloth edition, read it—actually rather liked it in the bargain—and, when finished, slipped it into the garbage as if it were an empty wine bottle. Was the man a barbarian? Or merely sensibly efficient? Was I contemptuous of such an act? Or secretly envious?

Put aside those questions for a bit while I attempt to draw the reader's tears. As a boy, I did not grow up in a bookish home. But through one of those accidents that go by the name of Fate, I caught the fever in college and soon became irrevocably bookish. When I read a book, I kept it, rather like a Boy Scout badge to display achievement earned. An habitué of secondhand bookstores on Fourth Avenue and University Place in New York, I also bought a goodly number of books—desert-island specials, as I thought of them—that I hoped one day to get around to reading. In this way I compiled a library of, roughly, three or four hundred books. Nothing fancy, but a literary man's library containing the modernist writers, the great nineteenth-century Russian, French, and English novelists, Americans of the 1920s, some history, the standard philosophers—small, as personal collections of books go, but mine own. Then I found myself having to make a move, at my own expense, across the country. Because I was a young married man with small children, economy measures were forced upon me. Moving books is expensive, so I decided to make the supreme sacrifice and sell my library. A man from the Argosy Bookstore on University Place was called in, and for the price of $135 he carried several loads in a laundry cart from my apartment to his station wagon. A pitiable sight I must have made—a child watching the Christmas tree being taken down on December 23. Of all the books I had acquired, I saved only six or seven thin volumes of Max Beerbohm's essays, Macaulay's four-volume *History of England* (which I have yet to read all the way through), and a luscious green cloth-covered Bodley Head edition of James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

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The story has what I suppose is a happy ending. I now sit in an apartment with approximately twelve or thirteen hundred books around me. I have reacquired all my Edmund Wilson volumes, my magnificent Russians, my Americans, my Frenchmen and Englishmen, and added a great deal besides. The character of my library, though still chiefly literary, has changed somewhat to match my changing interests: more history, more autobiography and memoir, a bit more philosophy, less drama, and (a new item) many volumes on language and usage. It is a reader's library, though, more than a scholar's. There is little in it that cannot be found even in a mediocre university library or purchased in paperback. Often I find it useful to have these books on hand—when preparing a lecture or writing a piece—but not too often. Like a diamond stickpin, or for that matter a Phi Beta Kappa key, my personal library is not altogether functional.

Let me now go on to a bloodcurdling story, though one that can only curdle the blood of the bookish. I see fairly frequently a writer of international celebrity. He gets heavy mail, much of it of a bookish kind. Bound galleys and review copies flood into his home, propelled by the dreams of publishers and writers that he will read these books, be swept up by them to the point of championing them in a public way: by supplying a blurb or perhaps writing a review. An intellectual to the bone, he is a wide-ranging and voracious reader, but a man has his limits even if publishers, apparently, do not. On occasion he has asked me if I cared to have any of the books recently sent to him. I too have my limits, and once, when I chose not to take any from a small pile he offered, he picked up the pile, walked over to the incinerator in his kitchen, and dropped them down. I gulped. Book-burning, for God's sake! He laughed, announcing, "I am the Torquemada of the thirteenth floor." My immediate impulse was to run down fourteen flights of stairs to the basement and pull the books from the flames.

Obviously, I have not developed the degree of resistance of my friend—who is a virtual black belt, a monk of the highest contemplative order when it comes to discrimination in such matters. I still cannot pass a secondhand bookstore without going in. In England, I head straight for Charing Cross Road—street of Foyles, of other used and new bookstores, of a store filled to the ceiling with sleek new Penguins. I read all catalogs, browse in all bins.

Books, like money, tend to bring out the neurotic strain in the bookish. Some months ago, I was interested to read in Walter Lacquer's memoir of his friend George Leichtheim, the political writer, that Leichtheim was, in his writing, unable to quote from any book he did not own. Others will not lay hand on a paperback. Still others will read only books in British or foreign editions. I myself cannot bear to read a book in which someone else has underlined passages. I can read the books of V. S. Naipaul only in Penguin editions, those of Theodore Dreiser only in cloth.

But along with being a tale of tears and of terror, this is also a tale of human reform—it has an element of uplift. In this aspect of the tale, necessity turns out to be the mother not only of invention but of virtue. A problem of space and demand was involved. To retain the books now in my possession—and I do not speak of backlogs of issues of magazines and journals—and to accommodate those that continue to stream in, would necessitate radical measures: move to a larger place, remove some ample piece of furniture or major appliance to make room for more bookcases, sell a child. The alternative, only slightly less painful, was clear: trim down my library by a hundred or so books and possibly more. But which books?

The job might have been a good bit easier if my library contained a great many fifth-rate books—an ample collection of detective stories, say, or of science fiction. But nothing of the sort exists to make the job easier; rather than fifth-rate, I have a good many second- and third-rate books. All of them, alas, are serious books, many of them, as I survey them now, a bit too serious for my taste. Many of them, too, are not books that I went out and purchased, but are books that over the years I have been asked to review or that I have acquired in order to fulfill one or another literary task. A personal library often represents a man's character or, if it consists largely of unread books, his aspirations. But my library, while doing both these things, also represents what others, chiefly editors,

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have thought of me. Only my tailor measures me correctly, said Dr. Johnson, who usually went about ill dressed.

Attrition might make a start in cutting back my library, and by attrition I mean not to bother calling in those volumes that I have lent to others. One such volume is the *Letters* of Lord Chesterfield, whose advice I am now probably too old to make much use of, and the friend who borrowed it several years ago has apparently not learned much from it either (see Lord Chesterfield on punctuality). Another volume out on loan is Edith Sitwell's *English Eccentrics;* because it is at the home of a friend who keeps more books in smaller quarters than I do, more likely than not the book is unfindable anyway. The two volumes of Malcolm Muggeridge's autobiography, *Chronicles of Wasted Time,* which I enjoyed greatly, have been lent to the Torquemada of the thirteenth floor. Have they by now, I wonder, met the flame? No matter. The author of *Chronicles of Wasted Time* would probably agree that I ought not to waste any more time on his books.

Trimming down a library in this way makes me wish I owned certain books I do not in fact own—if only for the delight of getting rid of them. The novels of Harrison Salisbury, if I owned them in the first place, would, I should imagine, be easily jettisoned. Books about show business, about politics in Latin America, about auto racing; books with titles that begin *The Death of . . .* or *The Politics of . . .* ; books on new forms of psychotherapy, on urban renewal, on arms control—shelves and shelves of these, if only I owned them, could go without a quiver of hesitation on my part.

But I am stalling. The problem is, I have come to have an unhealthy respect for books, and this is not lightly shaken off. Part of it is a respect for books generally, but an even greater part is for the books I have acquired. Walter Benjamin, in an essay entitled "Unpacking My Library" in his book *Illuminations,* a book I intend to retain in my library, notes with characteristic subtlety: "Every passion borders on the chaotic, but the collector's passion borders on the chaos of memories. More than that: the chance, the fate, that suffuse the past before my eyes are conspicuously present in the accustomed confusion of these books. For what else is this collection but a disorder to which habit has accommodated itself to such an extent that it can appear as order?" A book in one's own library is in a sense a brick in the building of one's being, carrying with it memories, a small block of one's personal intellectual history, associations unsortable in their profusion. Yet this building from time to time needs landscaping, tuckpointing, sandblasting.

Books on social problems seem good ones to begin chipping away. Social problems in America in recent years seem to be distinguished by two special qualities: they are perpetually changing and they are never solved. They do not really go away; instead people merely grow bored with them. Take an excellent book from my library, Robert Penn Warren's *Who Speaks for the Negro?* Most of those who deigned so to speak—the book was published in 1965—are by now dead, superannuated, or have lapsed into obscurity. The Negro, in many quarters, isn't any longer even called Negro. Time has done the book in; turned a lively and passionate work into a historical document. My copy happens to be in paperback and hence does not take up much shelf space, so I shall keep it. Another paperback in the social problems realm that I shall relieve my shelves of is an item entitled *A Manual for Direct Action,* which appeared in the early 1960s and offered advice about staging sit-ins and other protest demonstrations. One small piece of its advice, I recall, was for a demonstrator to wear two or three pairs of underpants when sitting-in, so that if the police dragged him off at least his bottom would not get unduly scraped.

Children of Crisis, Robert Coles's three-volume work, will, I am afraid, have to go. A few years back, I read its more than 1,700 pages, most of them interviews, and I can remember almost nothing about them, except for an impoverished Appalachian woman's observation that, after losing one's first tooth, losing the rest of one's teeth comes much easier. (Why we remember what we remember from books is itself a splendid and mysterious subject.) Chances are great that I shall not return to Dr. Coles's three volumes, and they do take up a good deal of space. Out, then.

I should like to accomplish the task of trimming down my library with an even hand politically. Because Dr. Coles has come to

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have something of a leftish reputation, it would be well if I could match his departure from my shelves with that of a writer from the Right—to keep, so to say, a certain political balance. The books of William F. Buckley, Jr., are my choice. He is further to the Right than Dr. Coles is to the Left, true enough, but, more important than such political niceties, the seven or eight books of his that I own take up much more space. Besides, Mr. Buckley is better on television than in his books anyway, and should I ever grow hungry for him, he will be within easy reach.

Fiction is my next big cut, especially contemporary fiction of very recent years. Borges, Beckett, and Nabokov, though I do not adore their work, may stay. The work of their imitators, or workers in the same vineyards—Barthelme, Barth, Gardner, and the rest—I have come to consider English department teaching aids, and no longer read them. They go. Along with them goes a category of fiction that might be termed Last Year's Novel of the Year—fiction of purported seriousness with high commercial possibilities. Among such works that I am able to weed from my shelves are *American Mischief* by Alan Lelchuk, *Julian* by Gore Vidal, and *Something Happened* (nothing, incidentally, did) by Joseph Heller. I could, I suppose, get a jump on next year right now by throwing out E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime,* This Year's Novel of the Year, but I think I shall wait. Continuing on in the dispensable fiction category, the great *Gravity's Rainbow* question arises. I found myself unable to finish reading Mr. Pynchon's blockbuster novel. I read only enough to realize it was a book on which one might write an essay or deliver a lecture, but surely not read. If I go to my grave without reading it, which I figure to do, this will not be my chief regret. (A reviewer in a recent issue of the *Times Literary Supplement* wistfully remarked that, for all the liveliness of American fiction, there were still moments when he yearned for the fiction of J. D. Salinger: "One [moment] might occur on reading page 235 of Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* where the girl is defecating into the open mouth of Brigadier Pudding and you realize there are 500 pages still to go.") Still, it is harder to get rid of an unread than a read book. *Gravity's Rainbow,* then, will stay, the rationale for this decision being, "Best let sleeping dogs lie."

As I go through these books of mine, criteria emerge. One category marked for elimination is that of books I have read but do not expect ever to return to. Another category is books I have bought but have not yet got around to reading for the first time. How many unread books there are in my library I do not know. Usually these volumes represent failed aspirations. Consider some of their titles: a biography of Benjamin Jowett, another of Anatole France, *The Selected Writings of Sydney Smith* (introduction by W. H. Auden), *The Emergence of the Steppes: A History of Central Asia* by René Grousset, *Essays and Portraits in Anglo-Jewish History* by Cecil Roth, *Manners and Morals in the Age of Optimism* by James Laver, Saint-Simon's *Historical Memoirs,* and a beautifully bound and handsomely boxed three-volume Bollingen edition of *The Muqaddimah* by Ibn Khaldûn. (This last is a work I first learned about from the writings of A. J. Liebling, who not only once made a pass at reviewing it but used regularly to quote and paraphrase Khaldûn, the fourteenth-century Arab scholar, in his own pieces on boxing, food, and the press. What books I now have of Liebling's, by the way, will stay, and I shouldn't mind acquiring more.) All these unread books, too, must be retained, if only to show that I have not yet given up all hope of self-betterment.

Retained as well will be all those books I have partially read, sometimes only dipped into. Justice Holmes, in a letter to Harold Laski, once said that he had a puritanical streak in matters of reading: he could not, till well into his seventies, begin a book, no matter how poor it proved, without finishing it. What Holmes was able to manage only in his seventies, I have been able to bring off in my thirties. Among the partially read books in my library are William James's *Principles of Psychology,* Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation,* Leslie Stephen's *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century,* Van Wyck Brooks's five-volume *Makers and Finders,* and Steven Runciman's three-volume *A History of the Crusades.* But I seem able to put aside less monumental works as well. Sitting on my shelves with bookmarks still in them are E. M. Forster's *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson,* Evelyn Waugh's *Msg. Ronald Knox,* Henry Mayhew's *London Underground,* and Albert Jay Nock's *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man.* All these

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volumes will remain; I have hopes of completing them. (I plan a long life.)

The books of scholarly and intellectual and artistic friends must remain too, although their number grows larger as I grow older. Walter Benjamin notes that "Of all the ways of acquiring books, writing them oneself is regarded as the most praiseworthy method." Having friends who write them is next best. The Torquemada of the thirteenth floor, who is my secretly wished-for alter id in bibliographical matters, deals in a rougher justice here than I could ever hope to accomplish. In a secondhand bookstore, I once saw a book autographed for him by its author. I chuckled, then chilled. I have not the courage to do the same: I too much fear someone might do it to me. Also, I have always been touched by a story, told in P. P. Howe's *Life of William Hazlitt,* about Wordsworth's first visit to the home of Leigh Hunt, during which Hunt pointed out to Wordsworth a copy of the *Lyrical Ballads* on his shelf next to the works of Milton. Wordsworth, normally severe, is said to have melted.

I see that I make little progress. Time for a radical move, a slashing away to make space. With teeth gritted in determination, I remove the entire contents of a four-foot high bookcase holding years and years of back issues of *Commentary, Dissent,* the *TLS,* the *New York Review of Books, Hudson Review, Prose, Partisan Review, Encounter,* and *Modern Occasions.* I love—loved in the cases of those magazines that are now defunct—these magazines, have myself at one time or another contributed to most of them, but efficiency here subdues enthusiasm. Macaulay once commented that he felt that the life of any piece of intellectual journalism, his own included, was roughly six weeks. He was mistaken about his own, of course, but otherwise probably not too far off. The back issues of these magazines go—with love, but go they do.

The cleared space allows for rearranging shelves. Virtue not being sufficiently its own reward, I take time out for a bit of low-grade comic relief in the juxtaposing of books. Next to Christopher Lasch's *The Agony of the American Left* I insert Woody Allen's *Without Feathers;* next to Nietzsche's *My Sister and I,* Caffi's *A Critique of Violence;* next to Silone's *Bread and Wine,* Brillat-Savarin's *The Physiology of Taste;* next to Norman O. Brown's *Love's Body,* Santayana's *The Last Puritan;* and, finally, between Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation* and *Styles of Radical Will* I insert A. Alvarez's *Beyond All This Fiddle.*

Back to work. My next cut is a fine one—many fat volumes. These are the books of what might be termed the "agitational culture": works that appear on the scene, make a great flap (and much money), and then merely lie there. *The Kingdom and the Power* by Gay Talese is such a book, and the same author's *Honor Thy Father* is another. Out! David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* is yet another. Out! Tom Wolfe's *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* also goes with this lot. (Wolfe's *The Pump-House Gang,* which I have in paperback, and which consequently takes up less space, stays.) If Gloria Steinem had written a book, or if I owned one by Andy Warhol, they would be gone in this batch as well. Philip Roth's *Our Gang,* which I do own, goes. I remember that Roth's *Our Gang* and Talese's *Honor Thy Father* were reviewed in the same week in the daily press, one reviewer saying of the first that as satire it was of the quality of Swift, and another reviewer saying of the second that it surpassed Balzac. I reported these findings to a friend, who commented: "We sleep tonight—criticism stands guard." I sleep tonight without these books in my room.

I am getting the hang of this task. Because I am now not quite so hard pressed for space, I begin to look ahead to eye further possible deletions from my library for next year. Books of movie criticism are prime candidates. The same goes for all novels that assume no serious linkage between cause and effect in the lives of their characters; most French literature written after 1950; autobiographies written by Americans who have not yet reached their fortieth birthday; literary criticism that does not take a healthy interest in literary history or in the biography of writers; philosophy that does not at least make the pretense of being written with its readers' personal salvation in mind; and all psychobiographies of men and women who have been dead more than a century and hence whose backs never felt the couch. Books of this kind in my library, take warning: prepare to meet, if not thy maker, then thy recycler.

Some books, however, I find I cannot dis-

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pose of for sheerly sentimental reasons. Two sports novels for boys written by the late John R. Tunis, for example, which gave me so much pleasure so many years ago. I cannot imagine getting rid of three volumes of Dwight Macdonald's essays, which, though all are dated now, were written with marvelous verve and dash; until I came across them, at a most impressionable age, I had no idea that prose could be written with such panache. The same goes for the books of A. J. Liebling, who has always seemed to me the superior *New Yorker* writer—with a more interesting mind and a more fetching prose style than either James Thurber or E. B. White. Not all Edmund Wilson's books equally repay revisiting, but I find I cannot rid myself of any of them. Although many have said he was an objectionable man, to me his writing has always represented an ideal. He stays, in toto.

Apart from books kept out of sentiment, further criteria for retaining those in my library now present themselves. First, all books I retain should be true. If they are not true, they should at least be well written. If they can be neither true nor well written, they should at a minimum be well made. With these criteria in force, one might think that a reasonably educated man could keep his library down to roughly five hundred books. A sensible number, but I am not sure I can actually do this with my own library. I ask myself, given my personal tastes, critical standards, prejudices, acquisitive habits, what is irreducible in my library as it now stands?

W. H. Auden—most of whose books I have and all of which I intend to keep—makes a distinction very much to the point here. "Critical Judgment and Personal Taste," he wrote, "are different kinds of evaluation which always overlap but seldom coincide." It is personal taste, for example, that makes me value Auden's work, both poetry and prose, more than that of T. S. Eliot, who clearly had the more original and powerful mind of the two men. It is the warmth of Auden that attracts me, the idiosyncrasies and commonsensicality of his mind. In selecting books that will stay in my library, personal taste probably has a larger place than does critical judgment, but that is what makes it a personal library.

Books that I find I cannot get rid of, that I hope to go down with, and that my children will have to dispose of afterward, are almost all those I have been able to lay hold of by and about Tolstoy, Henry James, Chekhov, and Joseph Conrad. I have a similar enthusiasm for a less great writer who was a very great man: George Orwell. I will not release the French aphoristic writers, from La Rochefoucauld through La Bruyère to Alain, men who have come by their truths less through power of argument than through refinement of formulation. I do not love but I keep the books of the dark writers, chief among them Dostoevsky, Melville, and Kafka. Perhaps I suffer blind spots, but I do not make any conscious effort to collect the fiction of Mark Twain, D. H. Lawrence, or Virginia Woolf. Apart from E. M. Forster and Leonard Woolf, I prefer to read books about Bloomsbury than to read the Bloomsbury writers. I keep the books of F. Scott Fitzgerald, though I do not think they are very profitable reading for anyone over twenty-five years old. I have come to feel much the same about Ernest Hemingway. I read Norman Mailer, but am unable to reread him, and thus do not keep his books. I would, in fact—to put it in terms of marble-swapping on the playground—trade four Mailers for a single nonfiction V. S. Pritchett any day of the week. I do save the novels of Saul Bellow, who, though a novelist, is to me the foremost historian of contemporary American life. I cherish the books of Isaac Bashevis Singer for their Jewish spirit, those of Max Beerbohm for their exquisite wit, and those of William Hazlitt for what they have to teach about English prose style. Of single works, I cannot let go of I. J. Singer's *The Brothers Ashkenazi*, Edward Dahlberg's *Because I Was Flesh*, Ford Madox Ford's *The Good Soldier*, and Alexander Herzen's *My Past and Thoughts*. Nor of Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, C. M. Bowra's *Memories*, and Dwight Macdonald's marvelous anthology, *Parodies*.

Looking over my books, I see that I keep a good deal of poetry around the house. Not all of it is of the first quality, though I find I can eliminate none of it—too much like putting a kitten on the doorstep in a snowstorm. Of the poetry I do have, I turn more often to Wallace Stevens and e. e. cummings than to Eliot or Frost or Yeats. (Another instance, I suspect,

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of personal taste winning out over critical judgment.) Among the next generation of poets, I turn more often to Randall Jarrell than to Robert Lowell, and (recently) to Philip Larkin more than to either.

Another shelf of books I cannot bring myself to purge are those written by dissidents within the Soviet Union: Pasternak's novel, books by Medeyev, Amalrik, and Sharkov, Nadezhda Mandelstam's two valuable volumes of memoirs, her husband Osip's poetry, all of Solzhenitsyn. These are books I do not so much love as find necessary. (Excepting only Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews,* I do not save books about the Nazi era. Why I should keep the chronicles of one segment of barbarian history and not of another, I do not know.) I like to have these books around; they are a useful reminder.

I seem to have loaded up on Roman history in recent years, most of it in black-spined Penguin editions, which I read for what it has to convey about human nature played out on the grand scale. It stays in my library, as does the two-volume Hobbes translation of Thucydides. To be kept, too, are the books of the lucid and nontechnical philosophers: Hobbes, Hume, Mill, Bertrand Russell, and William James. I shall keep Santayana, whom I do not always understand but whom I appreciate for his serenity. I have the five volumes of Freud's *Collected Papers,* along with some of his separate studies and his *Letters.* Even though I do not believe in his general system ("Sublimation," writes Nadezhda Mandelstam, "what gloomy German brooding in his study ever thought of this one!"), I greatly admire his peripheral wisdom and his sense of mission. On the matter of great men, I have of late become a pushover for books by and about Dr. Johnson. John Wain's *Samuel Johnson,* one of my better recent acquisitions, stays.

In addition to all this are other standard and irreducible items: the English novelists and poets, Shakespeare (but no Shakespeare criticism), Cervantes, Gibbon, Pascal, Rousseau, Voltaire, Thomas Mann, Proust, Joyce, and a Gideon Bible stolen from a hotel room. Then there are the tools of the trade: *Webster's Dictionary,* the two-volume *Oxford English Dictionary,* an older edition of the *Britannica,* the Fowler and Follett books on usage, Mencken's *The American Language,* and a fine slender book by Sir Ernest Gowers entitled *The Complete Plain Words.* There must be other items I have missed enumerating. . . . But in all it is enough to keep a fellow off the streets for a good while.

Having cleaned out these shelves, and disposed of several of the superfluous books in my library, I feel a bit like Henry James, who, having shaved off his beard and prepared to enter upon his major phase, remarked that he felt "forty and clean and light." An illusory feeling for me, of course, not only because I am most distinctly not Henry James, but because the likelihood is great that in no time at all I shall load up the shelves again. The current week's *TLS* has nine previously unpublished drawings by Max Beerbohm; I have tried but I cannot throw that issue out. Looking over my library, I notice that I am two volumes short of having the complete *Collected Works of Walter Bagehot.* The novels of Evelyn Waugh have gotten away from me, too—all I have is his autobiography, the book on Ronald Knox, and a collection of travel writings. Neither do I have an Aristotle. I am missing some of the more recent volumes of Lewis Mumford. No copy can I find of Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men.* I would like to have all the novels of Conrad in the uniform J. M. Dent edition. I should like to acquire all these books—and countless others. Is there no end to all this, short of death? Probably not.

But I am determined to institute a rule to keep the size of my library within bounds. It is a rule taken from Cyril Connolly's *Enemies of Promise* (I keep all the Connolly I can find). That book, it may be recalled, was written in 1938 "as a didactic enquiry into the problem of how to write a book which will last ten years." My adaptation of this rule is to pledge myself not to keep any book in my library that is unlikely to interest me ten years from now. As rules go, it is quite sound. One problem it does present, though, is that, strictly adhered to, it would not allow me to keep my own books and other scribblings. The efficient life is hard.

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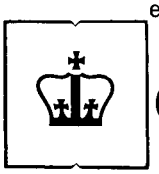

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Elitism
A British View

ANTHONY QUINTON

THE PRESENT LABOUR GOVERNMENT IN BRITAIN is committed to removing all selection by ability from the school system, or at least that part of it which is supported by public funds. Some time ago, the then education minister announced that in 1976 the winding up of the direct grant system would begin. The direct grant schools, among which are many of the best British urban day schools—for example, Manchester Grammar School and Dulwich—reserve a substantial number of places for able children from poor families whose fees are paid by the local government authority. The National Union of Teachers welcomed the announcement in the following words: "the decision marks a big step towards the removal of elitism from British education."

This is a typical occurrence of one of the most used words of political disapproval at the present time. Elitism is said to be exemplified by private schools and private medical arrangements. It is held to be present in school curriculums that emphasize high culture and neglect folk or pop culture. The word tends to be applied to any institution in which plans are drawn up and decisions made by any sort of inner circle of experienced professionals, indeed where decisions are reached by anything short of a mass meeting. Someone must by now have applied it, or soon will, to the division between officers and other ranks in the armed forces, to restaurants or clothing or cars of high quality, to grammatical rather than demotically colloquial speech and writing—to any form of human activity, in short, in which an effort is made to rise above a level of achievement accessible to the weakest performer.

In very general terms, what elitism is is clear enough. It is the loathsome opposite to comprehensive egalitarianism, the principle that all good things—in particular power, wealth, and status—should be equally distributed. In these very general terms, elitism seems to be the belief that there are often good reasons for unequal distribution of the

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things to which human beings attach value. But if one tries to arrive at a more detailed and specific conception of elitism, the matter becomes less straightforward. Is there really a theory or doctrine of elitism? If so, who are its theorists? Is the competitive pursuit of status and other desired ends by the superior always elitist? Are there to be no more competitive sports and games, with their associated apparatus of league tables and orders of merit? Is the bestowal of licenses to practice medicine or drive cars on the basis of examinations, which some will pass and some fail, unacceptably discriminatory?

The word *elitism* gets some of its pejorative force from association. In common speech, the elite used to be that socially select circle, united by mutual admiration and contempt for those outside, who frequented nightclubs and race meetings and stayed up in dress clothes into the small hours. More recently, we have become familiar with the elite guard of the SS; and the best known of the sociological elite theorists, Vilfredo Pareto, was, by and large, a supporter of Mussolini's fascism. The older association makes the idea of an elite both fatuous and rather offensive. The newer one makes it evil and menacing.

I am inclined to think that the fundamental elitist text is Plato's *Republic*. There are several instructive features about the choice. In the first place, the work is not as antiquated as the date of its composition might suggest. It was, after all, the operating manual of Benjamin Jowett, master of Balliol in the mid-nineteenth century and the most influential determiner of the style and purpose of British higher education from the time of its major reform in the 1850s and 1860s. In Jowett's interpretation, Plato's guardians became a public service elite of competitively selected and highly trained people, a ruling class not recruited by birth but by competitive examination, an intellectually superior mandarinate. It is by the products of this system, for the most part, that Britain has been ruled for the last century. The higher administration of the country—Parliament, the civil service, the upper management of the larger public and private corporations—has been manned by people selected and trained in accordance with Jowett's prescriptions. At the highest level, that of prime minister, there have been some feudal residues, such as Salisbury and Churchill and one or two men of the people such as Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald, but the norm has been Jowett's version of the Platonic guardian: Balfour, Asquith, Attlee, Heath, Wilson.

A second point about Plato's elite is that it is selected by merit or ability, on the basis of its members' possession of the talents appropriate to their elevated position. Elitism, that is to say, is not just inequality,

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but meritocratic inequality. The more traditional kind of inequality was largely a matter of inheritance. It thus seemed to be, like such other inherited advantages as good looks or good health, a matter of chance; a possible object of envy, no doubt, on the part of the less favored, but not the outcome of any deliberate, and thus readily alterable, social arrangement. The spectacle of inherited advantage seems to be less exasperating to those who do not have it than the kind of advantage that has been achieved by an individual's own efforts and gifts.

A final point is the closed or sequestered nature of the Platonic ruling class. To start with, its membership is to be supplied largely, though not exclusively, by the children of preceding members. Once in the class, a person receives a special kind of education and lives a special kind of life. Its mode of existence has often been seen as the paradigm of monasticism. It is more of a caste than a class.

The egalitarian opponents of elitism react to all three of these features of the Platonic ideal. They believe it to be exemplified by the social structure of Britain at the present time. They are offended by its insistence on fundamental differences of capacity between human beings, for it assumes that the fostering and rewarding of superior ability are essential to the well-being of society as a whole. They see it as picking out and secluding a small number of allegedly superior people from the rest of the community, the masses that are the proper counterpart of the elite, and endowing them with a monopoly of the power and status and the first and largest call on the wealth that all men desire.

Now, although I am opposed to comprehensive egalitarianism, I am far from willing to endorse the entire Platonic package. I am an elitist to the extent that I believe excellence should be recognized, fostered, and rewarded, but I am not in favor of an elite that is closed, either with regard to the selection of its members or with regard to its style of life and activity. I do not want to see society divided into a minority of highly educated manipulators and a manipulated mass, sharing neither language nor interests, almost two distinct human species. I believe that much of the rhetorical force of current egalitarian anti-elitism depends on linking the recognition of excellence with the idea of the elite as a caste, sharply separated from the masses, a link that involves the former in the deserved disrepute of the latter.

How far does the recognition of excellence imply the emergence of an elite that is a closed caste? Before answering this question, something has to be said about the meaning of the word *recognition.* In its most literal and restricted sense, to *recognize* excellence is to admit that there is such a thing, hence to concede that this person has it and that person

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does not. But one can admit the existence of a distinction without going on to do anything about it. We all know that people are of different heights and weights, but little in the way of policy depends on this fact, aside from allocation of beds and car seats.

In the more inclusive sense in which I intend to use it, recognition of excellence involves, beyond the acknowledgment that it exists, the belief that it should be fostered and encouraged to develop, largely by appropriate education; that it should be provided with opportunity for its effective exercise; and that its exercise should be encouraged by rewards. All three of these things are going to be more or less costly, so that in one way or another a larger than average share of the community's resources will be diverted to the possessors of excellence.

The educational fostering of ability requires a longer educational process, which is itself negatively productive: it requires smaller classes and it requires superior teachers, whose services can be secured only by larger than average rewards. Those teachers who carry out conspicuously valuable services for the community need to be relieved of the everyday practical nuisances that are calculated to use up time and energy that could be more valuably employed. (I do not imagine that Fidel Castro goes to work by bus.) More positively, they need the power and resources without which their abilities cannot be actually exercised at all. Finally, they need some direct inducement to apply themselves to the tasks, responsible or arduous or both, that in everyone's interest they should perform.

Many who would be prepared to recognize excellence in the minimal sense of admitting that it exists, and who would also agree that it ought to be fostered and provided with opportunities for effective expression, would deny that any further reward needs to be given. Responsible work supplies the satisfactions of power. Interesting work, in particular where it makes full use of the qualities people most prize in themselves, is its own reward. Insofar as excellence is recognized in the minimal sense it will inevitably attract status to itself—that is to say, respect and a measure of deference that goes beyond what is directly entailed by the formal possession of power. What need, then, is there for any further reward of an economic kind?

Sterner egalitarians argue that once you allow a minority, whether excellent or not, to acquire power and status, its members will inevitably use their position to secure an economic advantage for themselves. And once that happens, you have the makings of a closed caste. Greater wealth, beyond what is needed simply to make it possible for socially valuable tasks to be carried out, will lead to a special style of life. What is

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more important in the long run is that the members of an elite that is notably better off than the mass of the population will try to confer on their children the advantages they themselves have enjoyed. In a way, provided they carry out the ordinary duties of parents, they are bound to do so.

There are, in fact, three different kinds of advantage that children can derive from their parents. The first is simply genetic. Any beneficial characteristic that is biologically inheritable—most notably, if controversially, intelligence—must pass from one generation to its descendants. Second, there are the benefits received from being brought up in spacious and comfortable circumstances: at the very least, those of being well fed and housed; more elusively, those of growing up in an intelligent, stimulating, interesting atmosphere. No doubt in the case of many ostensibly privileged children this advantage is neutralized by the opportunity wealth gives to indifferent parents to neglect their children, by handing them over to the care of more or less inadequate childminders. But such a sharing of the load of upbringing may equally enhance the quality of parental affection and interest, and there seems no reason to suppose that there is any great variation in parental inadequacy at different social levels. It would seem, if anything, to be one of those great human constants—like irritability, or a sense of humor, or enthusiasm for sex—that are randomly distributed and not significantly correlated with other human differences. Third, there is the inheritance of wealth.

Now, if wealth is inherited by those who have neither inherited the ability of those who acquired it nor, for some reason or other, derived any advantage from the circumstances of their upbringing, elite positions will be secured by those who do not have the qualities, whatever they may be, by which those positions were obtained in the first place. The elite, in other words, will decay. That, according to Pareto, is the natural course of development. An effective elite bequeaths its position to its less effective descendants. Elites, then, must be replaced, either by a revolutionary supersession if they are very exclusive or, more peaceably, by a continuous exchange of personnel with the masses, whose abler members are constantly recruited into them.

It might be thought that if ability is biologically inheritable—as intelligence, which is certainly a part of ability, seems to be—the children of a capable elite ought to qualify as a capable elite themselves. But that argument leaves out a good many factors of dilution. First, the element in ability for whose inheritability there is considerable support, intelligence, is only a part of it. Energy is needed just as much, and also

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perhaps good sense or, at any rate, a certain mental stability and balance. Second, no one would claim that the children of intelligent parents will certainly be at least as intelligent as they; at best there is only a substantial probability that they will be. But a large proper fraction multiplied by itself a number of times becomes quite a small proper fraction: a superimposition of probabilities becomes an improbability. Third, a point that is not often raised in this connection is that children have two parents, who may be quite different from one another. I have often wondered, not perhaps with the utmost seriousness, whether the Paretian decay of elites could not be reconciled with the inheritability of intelligence by the tendency of successful men to marry very pretty women.

Egalitarians often argue that the liberal ideal of equality of opportunity—the arrangement by which power, wealth, and status are available in open competition—is self-contradictory. If the second generation enters the competition from what may be described as irrelevantly different starting points, it will undermine itself. That will be the case only where those children of the successful who have inherited wealth, but have not also inherited, genetically or by upbringing, the relevant qualifications, are enabled to secure high positions.

Plato, of course, recognized this danger. In order to make sure that his guardians should not bestow the rewards of ability on their children who did not deserve them (according to his no doubt elitist notion of deserving), he decreed that there should be no fixed marital unions among his ruling class. As a result, fathers would not know their children or have any regular relationship with them, and would thus be immune to the claims of paternal affection.

The conclusion is that equality of opportunity is self-destroying to the extent that there is both substantial inheritance of wealth and a liability of elites to decay. The total withdrawal of the right of bequest would remove the former; a much more unattractive stratagem, that of selective breeding, might largely rule out the latter. As things stand, few would now deny the right of communities to limit bequests by estate duties so that able people of moderate means could advance to leading positions unimpeded by the inherited wealth of their less able competitors.

Elitism, in the moderate, sub-Platonic sense in which I would defend it, is not quite the same thing as the sociological elite theories that emerged as a reaction to Marxism around the turn of the century. Against the Marxian claim that the inevitable next stage in human social and economic development is the classless society, Pareto, Mosca, and Michels argued that no society, and certainly no complex industrial

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society, could exist without an elite. What they meant by an elite was a minority of determined and resourceful people who monopolize power and thus secure for themselves wealth and status.

A comparatively weak argument for this thesis is that human societies have always been stratified into the rich and deferred-to rulers and the poor and deferential ruled. That argument is menaced by the wheel, the steam engine, and the airplane; unprecedented novelties do crop up in human affairs. Pareto's reasoning was psychological: some people stand out from the general run of mankind because they want power and its fruits more than others do, and have the skill and resolution to get what they want. Mosca's reasoning, on the other hand, was organizational: concentration of power in a few hands is essential for the effective running of complex organizations, political or economic. Organizations without such central direction will either be competitively weeded out or will drift into conformity with the oligarchic norm.

Sociological elitism presented itself, with suspicious intensity, as a purely scientific doctrine, as an account of the factual necessities of social life. But plainly it is, as Marxism more candidly acknowledges in its own case, both science and advocacy. Its exponents believe, not merely that society must be oligarchical, but that it ought to be; that policies designed to eliminate the intervals between the upper and lower reaches of the social structure are damaging to attempt as well as impossible to carry through. Since an elite is inevitable, the rational aim of social policy should be to ensure that it is as stable and efficient as possible. Stability and efficiency go together. A vital elite that succeeds in recruiting the bulk of the preeminent ability in the community need not fear revolutionary displacement.

Marx himself, at times, spoke contemptuously of egalitarianism. The formula "to each according to his needs" is not "to each the same," and fairly substantial inequality could be required by the special needs of those carrying out socially important tasks. Marx's aim was the elimination of classes. These, in the circumstances that concerned him, were defined by whether or not their members had the means of production as their private property. Once the means of production were socialized, division into classes would disappear. But, as is clearly shown by the history of the Soviet Union, inequality in power, wealth, and status need not do so.

The opposite of elitism is egalitarianism, not socialism. Despite the late Hugh Gaitskell's best-known remark, "Socialism is about equality," the type of democratic socialism to which he was attached is only marginally egalitarian. In the abstract, socialism is not so much a view of how

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valued things ought to be distributed, even if greater equality is one of the ends it is designed to ensure. It is, rather, a view of how society should be organized. This view might be called statism, since it seeks to remove all the major institutions and organizations of society—banks, factories, large landholdings, schools and universities, hospitals, and so on—from private control and incorporate them in the state. As experience shows, this can easily be done without noticeably changing the internal hierarchical structure of the institutions in question. Public ownership of the means of production no doubt removes one kind of inequality, that based on invested wealth, but it can leave the other kinds intact. To the extent that public ownership is brought about by compensation rather than outright confiscation it will still leave partly standing the one kind of inequality it is designed to remove.

In practice, democratic socialism of Gaitskell's variety—the official doctrine of the numerically dominant moderate wing of the British Labour party—aims to diminish inequality rather than to eliminate it. It countenances a mixed economy in which only certain strategic industries are nationalized and within which the ordinary capitalist mode of organization persists. Steeply graduated taxation is invoked to finance large welfare programs, but well-off geese are still seen as the principal source of golden eggs.

As for totalitarian socialism, the notoriously unequal social structure of the Soviet Union was brought home to me by the innocent remark of a physicist who returned from a trip to Russia full of praise for the esteem in which physicists of his eminence were held there. In Russia, he reported, he would be receiving seventeen times the wage of a manual worker, not merely four or five times as in Britain.

The social development of the Soviet Union is not, of course, a direct realization of Marx's hopes and predictions. Marxism is put into effect in Russia in the special elitist form given it by Lenin. His view that the revolution had to be made by an elite, a vanguard party, could be extenuated as a concession to the fact that Russia had a very small industrial proletariat in 1917, and was intended to be no more than a temporary expedient. As things have turned out, despite the development of a vast industrial proletariat, the party has become the crucial and indispensable elite institution.

The most purely egalitarian of all the great political theorists, Rousseau, recognized that equality could be achieved only under very special social circumstances. In his view, it was possible only in a small, technically unsophisticated, and essentially isolated community of peasant proprietors, living in a simple way on the produce of their own land.

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Such a community would be independent of cities, industrial manufacture, and trade—a state of affairs approximated in the early stages of European colonization of North America and Australasia, but seldom elsewhere. This amounts to implicitly acknowledging the truth of the main thesis of the sociological elite theorists: only if men are almost wholly independent of one another can natural differences in ability and energy fail to result in social inequality. In communes and *kibbutzim,* only the most resolute egalitarian enthusiasm, normally peculiar to the founding generation, can prevent it from breaking out.

There are, it must surely be admitted, irreducible differences in ability and energy between human beings. It is not just that one man is best at doing one thing, another best at another. Almost anyone can adequately remove garbage, load and unload trucks, work on an assembly line, clean the floors of office buildings. Rather few people can effectively perform brain operations, manage large industrial enterprises, play *Hamlet*, judge complex legal cases, investigate the fine structure of matter. How are we to make sure, in the words of a sociological essay on stratification, "that the most important positions are conscientiously filled by the most qualified persons"? The usual method is to pay people more for doing them, so that there is active competition for the kind of work in question, giving scope for the selection of the best-qualified candidates.

This brings us back to a question left unanswered at an earlier stage. Positions that carry power or status or are inherently gratifying should be sufficiently rewarding in themselves, just because of these characteristics. What need is there to superimpose an economic advantage on top of these intrinsic benefits, at least any that goes beyond making it possible to discharge the duties of the position effectively? If a Shavian equality of income were established (mitigated perhaps by allowances for house-bound spouses and children), would the quality of the occupants of high-status, presumably important positions be notably reduced?

In many cases, surely, it would be. Not all high-status work is intrinsically gratifying. Power is nice, of course, but the responsibility that usually goes with it is not. Anyone who has held a few unpaid chairmanships in virtuous organizations will know how difficult it is to secure an adequate successor. Still, the thing could perhaps be done. The quality of people in high-status positions in Britain, for example, does not seem to have deteriorated very noticeably over the past fifty years, during which time their economic position relative to the average wage earner has deteriorated greatly.

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To the extent that incomes are determined by market forces, they will turn out to be highly unequal. The community, through the simple voting procedure of its consumption pattern, indicates the value it attaches to the services it receives. Furthermore, the income attached to a position is not always the most obvious determiner of its status. Poor artists and clergy are deferred to; rich bookies and brothel owners are despised. But, by and large, income and status go together, and to remove one reward is to undermine the other. What you get for little or nothing you are likely to attach little or no value to.

In Britain the salaries of university teachers are determined by the state and to a large extent, even if indirectly, paid by the state. Whenever the question of a pay-raise for academics comes up for public discussion, some contented member of the profession writes to the papers saying his job is so rewarding in itself that he is prepared to settle for less, rather than more, pay. Is he not engaged in intellectual work in the field that most interests him? Does he not have the company of ardent young searchers for knowledge? Does he not have long periods, free from teaching, for leisurely study?

It would be possible to treat the academic profession in the same way as the clergy (of which it was, after all, a part until a hundred years ago). There are academics, often quite able ones, who are fit for no other high-status work, but they are not very numerous. There are zealots who are so attracted to the academic life that they would stay in it, however meager the economic reward. But most academics fall in neither of these classes. Grateful, like the zealots, for the advantages of the profession, they are mindful too of the long stretches of instructional and administrative drudgery. One thing they might try to do is to move into the higher civil service. There salaries have gone up 50 percent over a two-year period during which academic stipends have risen by only 7 percent (a singular vengeance on their own pasts by such ex-academics as Harold Wilson and Anthony Crosland). Alternatively, there are the possibilities of moonlighting, the recourse of the underpaid academics of Latin America, or of emigration—not impossible even in these depressed times, given that Britain has only a sixth of the population of the English-speaking world.

Social changes that involve a sudden and radical disappointment of habitual expectations are both practically and morally objectionable. The practical objection is that they create a group of violently embittered people with seditious inclinations—at least if the change is brought about by deliberate policy and not by the natural course of events. The moral objection is that the pains of loss to the disappointed are not

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compensated for by the delights of gain to the beneficiaries of the redistribution. Frustrated expectations on a large scale are more disagreeable than unexpected benefits are gratifying. Except at the extremes of superabundance and destitution, large and sudden redistribution brings about a net loss of welfare.

In Britain, as in most countries, there has been a steady movement toward greater equality over the last hundred years. If there has been a tendency in past economic depressions for the better-off to regain some ground at the expense of the less well-off, the present depression is a startling exception. The disposable income, after taxes, of a family doctor or senior university professor is now not much more than twice that of a worker in an automobile factory.

Even more noticeable has been the movement toward what may be called equality of condition. The British class system has always been tenacious and intricate. R. H. Tawney, writing in the 1930s, said that no other country was so sodden with servile respect for money and position. Thomas Paine put the peculiar rigidity of the British class system down to the Norman Conquest. He saw the habits of self-effacing deference, constitutional in the lower classes of British society, as originating in the oppression of defeated Saxons by conquering Normans, and called on his fellow countrymen to undo the eleventh-century work of William I.

To a great extent this work has now been done, by gradual, peaceable, largely commercial means. When I was a child in the 1930s, there were three main classes in Britain, each susceptible to further, more refined division: first, gentlemen—that is to say landowners, bankers, industrialists, professionals, and officers; second, the lower-middle class of shopkeepers, office workers, and salesmen; and, finally, the lower classes. The most immediate mark of distinction between them was auditory, for they spoke quite different kinds of English. The gentry and the lower-middle class used much the same words, although the latter assembled them with greater grammatical gentility and revealed themselves by the use of a small set of specially refined expressions conveniently listed in that poem of John Betjeman's that begins "Phone for the fish knives, Norman." The chief phonetic indicator of the distinction was the vowel sound *ou* or *ow*. In Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay*, the revolutionary tailor tells Gumbril that he will be executed, when the time comes, for saying "towel" instead of "teaoul." Lower-class speech was much more distinctive, with its elided aspirates, abstention from the neuter pronoun, indiscriminate use of the nominative and accusative forms of the pronouns that were employed, and above all by accent.

This linguistic stratification has very much lessened in the last forty

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years, especially among people young enough to have grown up in that time. Radio and television have presumably been the chief linguistic homogenizers. Regression toward the mean has taken place from both ends of the scale. The kind of piercing, self-satisfied drawl that emerged from the mouths of Conservative parliamentary candidates during the Baldwin epoch (and some Labour ones, for that matter) is now hardly to be heard from anyone under sixty except Mr. Anthony Wedgwood Benn, formerly Viscount Stansgate, the current hero of the militant ultra-Left.

Another obtrusive distinguishing mark was dress. The collarless flannel shirt and stiff creaseless trousers of the old-fashioned workingman and the shapeless black garment of his prematurely aged wife have disappeared almost without a trace and are now to be seen only on the very old. The great agent of change here has been the mass production of cheap, attractive, even fashionable clothing, above all by the firm of Marks and Spencer from whose counters come the clothes of practically every child in Britain. Cheap and expensive clothes still exhibit differences to the attentive eye, but they are no longer utterly different kinds of clothes. There is nothing now that could be thought of as a kind of class uniform.

Similar erosions of caste are to be found in the universal ownership of cars, in styles of home furnishing, in leisure activities such as travel by air to the sunnier parts of Europe, in habits and tastes of eating and drinking. In its modest but solid way, this general equalization of condition is wholly to be welcomed. Simply as an equalization it much increases free and unconstrained communication among people. Fraternal civility replaces the complexities and pretenses of ritual deference. What is more, the process has not been merely an equalization; it has been, for the great majority of those affected, an upward movement.

But if the process is to continue, there has to be an "up" to move toward. If false deference to the outward and physical indicators of high status can be abandoned without regret, this does not mean that no human qualities are worthy of respect. The near-elimination of hereditary caste in Britain has been the work of a creative minority. If the process of equalization is carried to a point at which it is impossible for a creative minority to develop and flourish, the result will be stagnation and mediocrity. It is one thing to eliminate the inequalities that are, because excessive or unjustified, either unproductive or counterproductive. It is another to eliminate the inequalities on which vitality and progress depend.

This extravagant kind of egalitarianism is most evident in the field of

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education, where there is widespread hostility to any sort of selectivity or competition. Schoolchildren and university students should not, it is held, be exposed to the risks of discouragement involved in any sort of competition, whether for entry to a school or university or for examination of the quality of what they have achieved there. The most influential egalitarian theorist of recent years, Raymond Williams, proclaims "the substitution of cooperative equality for competition as the principle of social and economic policy." Against this I would assert, with John Stuart Mill, that "to be protected against competition is to be protected in idleness, in mental dulness, to be saved the necessity of being as active and intelligent as other people."

All but the most rudimentary social groups known to history have contained elites, few of them so ruthless and determined as the monolithic parties of those communist societies ostensibly dedicated to the removal of social distinctions between man and man. In the past, securing membership in an elite by merit has been obstructed by the hereditary principle, with its irresistibly ossifying influence. The selection of an elite in circumstances of fairly thoroughgoing equality of opportunity—hitherto confined to periods of revolutionary turmoil, as in mid-seventeenth-century England and late eighteenth-century France—has now taken on something of an institutionally stabilized form. The attempt, energetically pursued by the British Left, to do away with the rational residue of traditional inequality—which was the saving, justifying element in that inequality—can lead only to stagnation or, quite probably, the installation of a new, purely political elite that will use its absolute power to determine for the future, in terms of its immediate political purposes, what is to count as excellence.

A final point is that the demand for comprehensive equality in Britain is not made by those in whose interests it is ostensibly called for. Workingmen support their union leaders in obdurate strategies whose real aim is the revolutionary transformation of the social order, not on that account but for the sake of the extravagant wage increases that are the means to this end. It is significant that no kind of strike seems to evoke more enthusiasm from union members than one intended to preserve their "differentials," the traditional superiority of their reward to that of other workers.

More generally, there is no movement to equalize the few but gigantic main prizes in the football pools, which are now often on the order of half a million pounds. No government has suggested making winnings from bets liable to taxation, no doubt on a reasonable calculation of the popular response to such a proposal.

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There is a question about the moral sincerity of the small group of actual enthusiasts for comprehensive egalitarianism. If equality is right, it is right not just between one English person and another but between everyone. The average British worker has an income at least twenty times as large as his opposite number in India. If the incomes of the two nations were pooled and distributed equally between all the citizens of both, there would be about ten dollars per head per week left, or an average weekly wage of about twenty dollars for each wage earner. This would double the per capita incomes of Indians and save enormous numbers from starvation or the kind of malnutrition that leads to early death. Only a tiny, millenarist minority of egalitarians are ready to carry their reasoning to this consistent limit. For most egalitarians, equality begins at home.

The Man Without Legs

DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN

The man without legs has huge arms.
He rolls himself along Park Avenue on a skate-board,
    pawing the concrete with rubber knuckles.
Sparks fly from the steel wheels of his skates.
The man without legs is the quietest beggar in the city
and makes $225.00 a week after expenses.
He looks straight ahead.
He knows pity from the inside out.

DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN's most recent book of poems is *No Vacancies in Hell*.

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The American Heritage and Its Guardians

PETER SHAW

IN RECENT YEARS THE IDEA OF WHAT CONSTITUTES HISTORY has been extended to include oral traditions, physical objects, village and church records, and even gravestone inscriptions. Yet for the most part the written record, historical and literary, remains the major depository of the national heritage. Since 1960 several editing projects have attempted to arrange the written record of America into a modern, scholarly format. Historical scholars have reissued the papers of early American statesmen, and literary scholars the works of nineteenth-century American writers. Like Gothic cathedrals built over hundreds of years, the projects themselves have become institutions; and like other institutions, they have been attacked and defended, seen individual scholars come and go, and evolved in their purposes. The several hundred volumes that have appeared, and the several hundred that have not yet appeared, raise a number of questions about the uses of a nation's heritage.

During the present century, students of post-classical literature and of history began to appreciate the value of authentic texts. They learned that nineteenth-century editions of journals and letters by the famous not only were incomplete, but often had passages rewritten by descendants anxious to cover over what appeared to them as imperfections of character and excesses of expression. Henry Adams once asked a historian if he could confirm that John Adams, Henry's great-grandfather, had called Alexander Hamilton "a bastard brat of a Scotch peddler." He had, but Henry's father had left the phrase out of his edition of John Adams's writings. Even literary works, it developed, were affected by the taste and sometimes by the blue-penciling of editors, friends, and wives. Mark Twain's wife and his friend William Dean Howells prevailed on him to soften and make less colloquial some of Huckleberry Finn's language; Nathaniel Hawthorne's wife rewrote his journals for publication; and editors reworked Emily Dickinson's poems to make them scan and rhyme according to prevailing ideas of poetic correctness.

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In the cases where tendentious editing did not take place, less obvious changes of punctuation, spelling, and capitalization diluted the flavor of old works, and sometimes disguised their meanings. When an eighteenth-century statesman calls a man "Ambitious," his capitalization calls attention to a theory of behavior that implies much more than the desire to get ahead. An edited rendering of this judgment, with a lowercase "ambitious," could leave a historian partly ignorant of the political behavior he was trying to analyze. He might not recognize that the man believed to be infected with Ambition could inspire distrust all his life. Even in the absence of significant editorial alterations, the cumulative effect of modernizing or "normalizing" old texts misrepresents them to some degree. On the other hand, the sincerest effort to recover the true flavor of a faded manuscript also may end in misrepresentation. What is one to print when the writer sometimes makes the "a" in ambition halfway in size between a capital and lower case? Leaving aside the details of editorial technique, suffice it to say that it takes time to handle such a problem.

The question of time, it seems to me, is the basis of the controversy that began in 1968 over how the American tradition should be edited. Among reviewers of historical editions, the one objection raised from the beginning had been that too much time was being taken up by exquisite editing and annotation. But the main attack came on the literary side in reviews by Lewis Mumford and Edmund Wilson. Mumford was appalled by an editing scheme for Emerson's journals which reproduced his every revision of manuscript with such fidelity as to make the printed pages literally unreadable. Wilson did not question the texts when he reviewed editions of several novels by Melville and William Dean Howells, but he wrote that the enormous editorial effort expended on them had been a waste of time. Both reviewers found the volumes at hand bulky, expensive, ugly, and unnecessarily encumbered with editorial essays and tables. Eventually, Wilson's reviews were collected in a pamphlet titled *The Fruits of the MLA* (referring to the Modern Language Association, which sponsors the editions). He and Mumford were answered by several scholars in letters to the editor of the *New York Review of Books*, where their reviews had appeared, and these letters were collected with additions in a pamphlet put out by the MLA titled *Professional Standards and American Editions*.

The scholars argued that they shared their critics' concern for preserving nineteenth-century American literature, but that this end could be accomplished only if they laid the groundwork with their editions. There *were* problems involved in editing these texts, they insisted, but

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they had solved them unobtrusively by separating their editorial apparatus from the text it accompanied. (The encumbered Emerson edition was explained as a special case, which would be followed by a simplified edition.) Furthermore, their texts were being made available to paperback reprint companies at low cost. If only the editors could be left to their task, they argued, within a few years, perhaps a "decade," they would establish "definitive" editions of American authors. The job would not again need doing in the "foreseeable future." There ended the public debate, without either the technical or the cultural issues being settled.

By coincidence, the relationship of the American government to the American tradition had involved itself in the debate in two ways. Wilson reviewed the American editions because he had lost out to the scholars in bidding for federal support of his rival plan for inexpensive, relatively unedited editions of American works on the plan of the French Pléiade editions. What Wilson saw as a multimillion-dollar boondoggle of the government and the people, the MLA called a significant undertaking that was being subjected to criticisms based on nothing but Wilson's personal disappointment. Lewis Mumford brought in the government in the form of the Vietnam War. His review title, "Emerson Behind Barbed Wire," implied a parallel between the lack of humanism evidenced by the editors and the inhumanities of the American military in Vietnam. "The voice in which Emerson calls out to one," he wrote, "is drowned by the whirring of the critical helicopter, hovering over the scene." Wilson and Mumford shared a distrust of technology, which Wilson found operative in the Hinman collating machine used by the editors and Mumford found in the "technological extravagance" of their "automated editing." At the MLA's convention a few months after the Wilson and Mumford reviews, the young antiwar professors who temporarily gained control of the organization adopted this politicized literary terminology. They sold copies of Wilson's *Fruits of the MLA* and offered resolutions calling both for withdrawal from Vietnam and a cutoff of funds for the American editions.

In retrospect, the ruling fashion of the late sixties appears to have been less technology than antitechnology, along with a rhetorical confusing of unrelated issues with the Vietnam War. Wilson's and Mumford's attacks set the tone for easy dismissal of the American editions by most of the English profession. Yet there is nothing intrinsically antihumanistic in collating textual variants, or in employing a machine to simplify that task. Poking fun at the Hinman collator has a gentry-like ring of favoring handcraftsmanship at the expense of the worker. In

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their contempt for what Mumford called the "technological extravagance and human destitution" of the editors, critics unhumanistically continue to treat them as if they were machines. In fact, they have proved to be fallible men bemused by an apparently scientific method.

Since 1968 the debate over editing has become yet more technical in its terminology, and consequently has faded from public view. The very journals that continue the discussion are probably unknown to most professors of literature and history, not to speak of readers of the *New York Review of Books*. The titles of these journals might almost be imagined to support Wilson's and Mumford's recoil from dry professionalism: *Bulletin of the Bibliographic Society of America, Editing Nineteenth Century Texts, Jahrbuch für Amerikanstudien, Library, Modern Philology, Proof, Serif, Studies in Bibliography*. But the new debate has favored the assumptions of neither side of the old. And rather than resolving the issue of how to edit a written tradition, it has raised the questions of who will use the tradition and how its guardians should manage it.

Where Edmund Wilson questioned the need for editorial scholarship and above all its slowness, some editorial scholars have taken to questioning the method itself. Professor Fredson Bowers of the University of Virginia had introduced an editorial technique developed in connection with Renaissance plays. There, sloppy compositors worked from faulty manuscripts that in many cases probably came not from the author but from actors' copies. The modern editor was faced with widely differing printed versions, no one of which could be regarded as more correct than any other. W. W. Greg and others evolved a method whereby the best from each version could be utilized. Greg identified and used as his basic text the earliest printed version, which he called his "copy-text." Then he compared this with later versions to see if he could detect an author's hand in the variations that arose. Where he could do so he incorporated the changes, leaving aside variations accountable as printer's errors or normalizings. The resultant text was "eclectic," since it coincided with no previously printed version. Being the result of a tested theory, though, it carried more authority than an editor's choice of the best version of each line.

The theory was simple. One would hardly recognize Greg's formulation of it as a major contribution without knowing that when he published "The Rationale of Copy-Text" in 1949, more than fifty years of editing Renaissance plays had gone by without anyone's having codified a statement of principles. The earliest edition of a work, Greg explained, should be taken as "copy-text" by the modern editor even in cases where an author revised later editions, because the first edition remains the

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closest to his manuscript. When an author corrects and revises later editions, he concerns himself with his *words*—those the printer has got wrong and those he sees a chance to improve. In this concern with words, an author tends not to pay attention to printers' errors of spelling and punctuation. These elements are called "accidentals" by modern textual scholars, while (in keeping with our age's need for jargon) words are called "substantives." If one selected the *last* edition as copy-text, one would have the author's latest corrections but not the spelling and punctuation with which he had begun. By starting with the earliest edition and incorporating only changes in the words, one ends with the closest possible approximation of the author's intention. The theory, Greg emphasized, was only a guide. One had to rely on judgment in determining which changes were authorial, and one had to be prepared to depart from theory when circumstances required. It might be evident, for example, that the author *had* paid attention to some of his "accidentals"; in this case the editor would be forced to breach the theory in following the revisions. Throughout, of course, the editor had to distinguish between errors that he *should* correct and words, spellings, and punctuations that he didn't like but should let stand as having more authority than his personal taste or his hunch that an awkward expression wasn't really what his author intended.

Had Wilson and Mumford looked into the theory of copy-text they would have realized that Fredson Bowers employed a method with as much dependence on taste and judgment as any other scholarly activity. Had they looked into the backgrounds of the other editors using the Greg technique, they would have discovered that most of them had backgrounds in literary but not textual scholarship. Instead of a monolithic technocracy, they represented a group of neophytes learning as they went along. Their critics missed not only the really serious mistakes that resulted, but the causes of those mistakes as well.

In 1964 the Center for Editions of American Authors came into existence with federal money denied to Edmund Wilson for his Pléiade-like edition. It took under its wing some editions already in progress and initiated and approved others during the next few years. It awarded a seal for the title pages of volumes that met its editing requirements. The editions bearing this seal comprise the American Editions. They include Stephen Crane, John Dewey, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, William Dean Howells, Washington Irving, Herman Melville, William Gilmore Simms, Henry David Thoreau, and Mark Twain. (Other projects, like the writings of Walt Whitman, have received partial approval and funds from the center.) The statement of editorial method

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by Fredson Bowers for his edition of Hawthorne in effect became the Center's standard, as that edition became its model.

In 1950 Julian P. Boyd issued the first volume of the *Writings* of Thomas Jefferson. In the same year the Federal Records Act empowered the National Historical Publications Commission to support additional projects. Boyd's statement of editorial method became the guide for the editions of statesmen's papers that soon followed. These included the writings of John Adams and the Adams family, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, James Madison, and George Washington. Boyd, with a minimum of theorizing, dedicated himself to collecting variant forms of documents, selecting the best, and transcribing faithfully but not quite literally. Without correcting texts or changing spelling, he expands contractions, eliminates eccentric punctuation, and within brackets supplies missing words and parts of words. As an example of his method, Boyd offers a sentence by Jefferson (first rendered literally and then in its edited form):

Carleton havg hrd yt we were returning with considble reinfmt, so terrifd, yt wd hve retird immedly hd h. no bn infmd by spies of deplorble condn to wch sm pox had redd us.

Carleton having heard that we were returning with considerable reinforcement, [was] so terrified, that [he] would have retired immediately had he not been informed by spies of [the] deplorable conditions to which smallpox had reduced us.

In responding to its critics, the Center for Editions of American Authors stressed "the permanence" of its editions. Bowers explained that these were "definitive" texts, "the ultimate form that need never be done again." In 1972 he ended a defense by writing of the editions: "The results will live—we guarantee you—and will still be a source of pride to our great great great grandchildren." In the meantime, a new kind of reviewer of the editions appeared: scholarly, precise, trained in the same school as Bowers, and more devastatingly critical than the humanists. Several of these critics questioned the applicability of copy-text theory to nineteenth-century American works. Fredson Bowers, they charged, was unfamiliar with the period, as evidenced by his ignorance of distinctive American spellings. In reviewing Bowers's edition of Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, John R. Freehafer concluded that 250 editorial emendations, many of them spellings, were incorrect. Elsewhere, assessing all of Bowers's Hawthorne volumes, he concluded: "the vast majority of the . . . emendations in these texts can already be identified as mistaken." In

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response, some of the editors retreated. One explained that the center's seal of approval merely stated that a given book was "*An* Approved Text," not that it claimed to be the only or definitive edition. Another admitted that the American Editions were "far from perfect," and a third referred to editorial "boondoggling," "delay," and "incompetence." Coming full circle from the original claims of perfection, this editor concluded: "no one is qualified to say that all the editions will not have to be redone."

In contrast, the writings of the statesmen have been received with gratitude and awe. Their interpretive notes may be said to constitute a new school of historical scholarship. Boyd and Lyman H. Butterfield of the Adams Papers have gone furthest in raising and answering historical questions in their annotations. Comparing their approach with the minimum of notation in other historical editions, some reviewers have found it "excessive" and obtrusive. Such criticism has been confined to a few passing remarks, though; no one has offered systematic criticism, and most of those who have raised any question have concluded that if Boyd, Butterfield, and their assistants can sustain their brilliance, then their results bar complaints that rest on theoretical grounds. Indeed, the only edition that may prove less than satisfactory, the Hamilton *Papers,* has erred in the direction of editorial restraint. One volume, adhering strictly to the decision to print all that Hamilton wrote, contains little more than his transcriptions from Madison's diary and his notes for the *Federalist* papers. (Judging the matter from a literary perspective, however, I would guess that when critics compare the *Federalist* notes with the final versions, they may find them more valuable than the reviewer in the *William and Mary Quarterly* suspected.) Two other Hamilton volumes print without comment documents that raised editorial questions for Julian P. Boyd. Boyd's solutions resulted in the spectacular discovery that Hamilton treasonously meddled in American foreign policy. (Boyd published his analysis in 1964 in *Number 7: Alexander Hamilton's Secret Attempts to Control American Foreign Policy, with Supporting Documents.*)

Putting aside exceptional achievements, the historical editors still unquestionably have had far greater success than their literary counterparts. The explanation appears to lie in one crucial editorial decision on which the two groups differ. Where the literary editors opt for an eclectic text, the historians opt for faithful transcription of a single text, with the variants indicated in footnotes. With an eclectic text, the problem of variants is solved at the expense of making them disappear from view; with the texts given by the historical editors, the reader can estimate the importance of the variants (with the help of suggested interpretations in

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the footnotes). Only the editors of the Hamilton *Papers,* again, appear to have gone wrong here, and then not theoretically but practically. They reprint the earliest versions of Hamilton's newspaper articles—a choice with a superficial resemblance to the copy-text approach—even when other versions are more complete and more desirable. The case does not suggest that historical editors should adopt the method of eclectic text; nevertheless, one has the feeling that each set of editors might usefully have advised the other. For the historical editor requires a literary appreciation of nuance, while the literary editor needs the historian's respect for fact. (Significantly, perhaps, the most successful editor, besides Boyd, is a literary scholar doing a historical edition: Lyman H. Butterfield.) The two sets of editors, with their opposite kinds of problems, recall Shakespeare's tragedies in which each hero is faced with the one problem he cannot handle. If only Iago had tried to trick Hamlet instead of Othello, and if only Othello instead of Hamlet had been given the task of avenging his father! In the case of the literary editions, the editors' tragic flaw was their respect for language.

In explaining his enormous effort to record slight differences among variant manuscripts and texts, Fredson Bowers points out that an accumulation of small changes by proofreaders and compositors can affect the "texture" of a work, with an ultimate effect on meaning. He attempts to winnow out these changes in order to reconstruct the author's work in its original state. But mark how good intentions may bring more harm than bad. It would be unfair to the author literally to transcribe his manuscript without correcting his obvious oversights. If he went through the manuscript changing a character's name, for example, but forgot to make the substitution in one instance, the editor must supply the deficiency. (A historical editor, in the parallel instance of his author's writing a name incorrectly, prints the wrong name followed by a bracketed correction.) An eclectic text, therefore, becomes an attempt not only to eliminate unauthorized changes made in previous editions, but to recapture "the author's intention." This phrase, which appears in the title of a Center for Editions of American Authors booklet, opened the door to chaos. For did not the author intend that his misspellings be corrected? And did he not further intend that his variant spellings be regularized, along with his capitalization and hyphenation and punctuation? Interpreted liberally, as it has been, the method of attempting to plumb the author's intention can mean more, rather than less, tampering with his text.

But these liberalities were only the beginning. What if the author's intentions changed? Bowers, following Greg, aimed to discover the au-

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thor's *final* intentions, but this soon proved inadvisable in numerous situations. The editors of Melville's *Typee* decided to reject many of Melville's own revisions made when he went over the first, English edition of his novel to prepare it for publication in America. They concluded that "original intentions may often be more valid than final intentions." In their judgment, Melville's publisher may have pressured him to alter certain expressions that the publisher feared unacceptable to American readers. Along with these changes, they rejected Melville's apparent attempts to counter criticisms of his narrator by reviewers of the English edition. The reviewers had found the narrator's speech too literary for an ordinary seaman, and in response Melville apparently tried at several points to make him sound more salty. The editors judged these changes out of keeping with the novel's original texture. In all, the editors developed six categories of changes by Melville that they could reject for violating his original intentions, or his "true" intentions, or his "concept of the book as an artistic whole." The last and least category, fittingly, contains the flaw in their logic.

According to the concept of an artistic whole, revisions of *any* type made by Melville could be rejected when these revealed the influence of later developments in his style. This was to introduce, in the name of scholarly objectivity, an essentially subjective basis for editorial revisions. Far from being technocrats icily determining accurate texts with the help of machines, the editors were awash in a sea of speculation. The final product of their guesses, "authorized" by the Center for Editions of American Authors, would not have been authorized by Melville, by either his English or American publisher, or by anyone else connected with his book in the nineteenth century. The meddlers among Melville's contemporaries, while they were ready enough to make changes of their own, at least restricted themselves to a single concern. In contrast, the modern editor revises in several ways. He rewrites usage, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and hyphenation—sometimes supplying a correction and sometimes retaining an incorrect form even when the author has changed it. For example, in *Typee* a changed possessive, though evidently Melville's correction, is rejected because by copy-text theory an author pays no attention to "accidentals."

Thus has the greatest respect for language, together with copy-text theory, resulted in versions of Melville and others that should be called almost anything but "definitive." Furthermore, the same concern for language has ended in undermining the originating premise of modern textual scholarship: rescue of the text from bowdlerizers, censors, and correctors.

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Possibly the most stunning liberty with an author's text in the twentieth century occurs in a 1962 edition of *Billy Budd,* completed just before the American Editions began. In setting the execution of Billy Budd in historical context, Melville recalls the similar executions, aboard the American navy ship *Somers,* of "a midshipman and two petty officers." The editors' note 281 reads:

> Philip Spencer was an acting midshipman; Samuel Cromwell "was in fact the boatswain's mate, but the other, Elisha Small, was a plain 'seaman.' " (The present text is emended to read "a midshipman and two sailors.")

Faced with the famous error in Keats's "On First Looking into Chapman's Homer," the same editors presumably would correct it to read:

> . . . like stout Balboa when with eagle eyes
> He stared at the Pacific.

"In fact," their note would read, "it was not Cortez who first reached the west coast of South America."

This is not the place to outline a theory of authorial error. But if simple respect for a writer's own words will not preserve them from editors, Freud's doctrine in *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life* offers the definitive argument against unconsidered editorial corrections. Freud's book made it a matter of common sense that an error usually reveals more than does a controlled statement of intention. The executions Melville referred to in *Billy Budd* took place aboard a ship on which his own cousin had been first lieutenant. Any unconscious exaggeration by Melville of the rank of those executed has possible significance for the astute reader. This is not to say that the error is easily interpreted. Did Melville exaggerate to increase the importance of the parallel with the *Somers*—or out of a vaguely shared guilt over his cousin's complicity in the matter, or both? In any case, for an interpreting age like our own, the change from "petty officers" to "a midshipman and two sailors" is as significant as a nineteenth-century editor's excision of an entire paragraph of sexually explicit or politically dangerous material.*

* Some other examples of slips useful to the critic appear in published essays by editors of American Editions. One editor misspells "judgment," while Fredson Bowers writes of "the celebrated English scholar F. L. Leavis" instead of F. *R.* Leavis. The errors help to reveal a slightly old-fashioned, slightly anglicized cast of mind. In the first case, the older but still current English form "judgement" appears; in the other, Leavis evidently has been confused with the older English critic F. L. Lucas. The spellings and errors by American authors that have been corrected by these same editors hold a similar minor interest for the critic.

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Historians are prevented from the well-meaning excesses of the American Editions not necessarily by common sense but by their fundamental respect for historical fact. For them both the text and its variants qualify as historical facts. Authors of historical diaries frequently cut passages for revealing too much, rather than for stylistic reasons. Such passages clearly must be preserved. In general, the historian realizes that he cannot know what value a fact may take on for later investigators. He has seen trivia from the traditional point of view—account books, random jottings—become statistics for the newer quantitative historians or data for psychohistorical investigation. As for seemingly insignificant variations among documents, Boyd has demonstrated in his preface to *Number 7* how editorial investigation of these can lead to discoveries.

The literary editors might have learned the same lesson from their editorial predecessors. But they could hardly think of themselves, who worked to *reverse* censorship, as bowdlerizers and censors. Did they not restore the political and sexually offending passages that were changed by Melville, Howells, and Stephen Crane in capitulation to censoring editors? In that restoration process, Fredson Bowers went so far as to remove an important paragraph from Stephen Crane's *Maggie, A Girl of the Streets*. For a second edition three years after the book appeared in 1893, Crane, like Melville, evidently reworked or removed passages that his publisher feared offensive to the genteel. At the same time, naturally enough, he strengthened other passages and removed still others without reference to his editor's requirements. But which were which? Near the end of chapter 17, Crane removed a paragraph describing the prostitute Maggie's lowest point of degradation, her encounter with a "leering," "huge fat man." Though this was strong stuff, Bowers argued, it was not explicitly sexual; therefore Crane had not removed it in response to editorial pressure. The editor might admire the passage but was bound to cut it in order to honor the author's intention. At this point Bowers might have been expected to notice some theoretical problems.

Who is to say whether in future the results of self-censorship by writers, even though in response to pressure, will not appear at least as characteristic as the versions now being restored? To deny this possibility one has to be convinced that American authors were alienated utterly from the spirit of their age. This was D. H. Lawrence's influential thesis, reflected clearly enough in the editorial supposition that all genteel revisions were unwelcome to their authors. Yet this is simply to apply the cultural values of one age to another. It is, of course, impossible for a scholar entirely to avoid error. He invites it, though, when he turns a cultural supposition into a tool of analysis by assuming that

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revisions concerning sexual and political matters must have been made against the author's wishes. The editorial revisions made on this theory, reflecting the politically and sexually progressive 1960s and 1970s, stand a good chance of one day looking as much like censorship as the most notorious nineteenth-century bowdlerizations.

All this is avoided by a historical approach. But such is the lack of concern for history in the American Editions that an editor defending Bowers's silent corrections of Hawthorne's accidentals can write, "Students of the history of punctuation and spelling will regret this loss [as will students of the development of Hawthorne's style, it may be added], but most users, it seems to me, will ordinarily find the arrangement a sensible compromise." The editors have come a long way from their original proud boasts of professionalism to this genial defense of sloppiness. Partly they have retreated in the face of critics, but in at least equal part they have chosen their own direction. The principles left strewn along the way evidence an abandonment of scholarly principles, even as they trace the rout of literary humanism in our day.

The dismissal of "students of the history of punctuation and spelling" betrays an uneasiness with scholarship that appears elsewhere in recent scholarly editing. Surprisingly, for a project with its reputation for scholarly exhaustiveness, most of the American Editions lack footnotes, bibliography, and indexes. Yet several of the problems arising from variants could have been solved with these and other standard devices utilized in the historical editions. Melville's two petty officers could have been given a note explaining his error; Crane's omitted passage about the fat man could have been included within brackets, in a footnote, or in an appendix. None of these solutions was available because the editors had decided in advance to issue "clear texts," that is, texts entirely free of editorial markings. In the fashion of nonprofit organizations involved in partly commercial projects, they went further in avoiding the appearance of seriousness than a trade publisher would find necessary. (These are days when commercial broadcasters worry about quality while public television producers talk about markets and audience appeal.) As a result, the reader genuinely interested in the variants among previous versions of a book will find that much information is difficult to search out and some is omitted altogether.

In retreating from its original claim for "definitive" editions, the Center for Editions of American Authors eventually rested not on its editing but on its editorial apparatus. "A definitive edition," its revised introductory booklet explains, "should never have to be done again, because it presents the evidence." Even if the editing should prove less than

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perfect, in other words, each volume retains permanence by recording in its scholarly appendixes all the variants that would be required for revisions, in the unlikely event that these should prove necessary. As another of the Center's booklets emphasizes, "there can be no silent emendations." But this alternate claim to definitiveness will not stand either. In the William Dean Howells edition, "obviously needed punctuation" is "silently" supplied, though no one has estimated how extensively. However, one Center editor estimates that Bowers's *House of the Seven Gables* contains "three or four thousand" unrecorded emendations. (It was this loss of the *record*, not of Hawthorne's actual spelling, that the reviewer thought the student of spelling and punctuation might regret.) In addition, in the case of Bowers's *The Marble Faun,* "a reader in search of a key item of information may look in thirteen places without finding it; or he may find that it is the subject of several notes or discussions, all of them incomplete."

Some of these shortcomings may be traced to a second important decision: to omit explanatory notes. At the very least, this has prevented any of the exploratory scholarship that distinguishes the historical editions. In addition, in the opinion of one critic, a number of incorrect emendations stemming from an unfamiliarity with certain nineteenth-century expressions could have been avoided in the process of gathering information for explanatory notes. The absence of scholarship, in short, has resulted in books that satisfy neither the scholar, who finds too little editorial apparatus, nor the general reader, who finds too much.

As a further result of these procedures, instead of having completed editorial work on American books "for all time," as Bowers thought, the Center's editors have in fact laid an additional task on the future: that of combing their editions for silent emendations and errors. Anyone preparing an edition in the future would first have to check the Center's texts against previous editions and against manuscripts where they are available. This is because all emendations have not been listed, and because of what a recent favorable reviewer of several Mark Twain volumes described as "a few mistypings that escaped even the standards set by the Center." The new editor then would have to compare successive printings of each Center text; for the second impression of *The Scarlet Letter*, at least, "has been revised without notice." He would have to avoid relying on Bowers's statement of editorial principles, since the various series differ from one another in their methods. For example, where the Hawthorne and Melville volumes restore passages removed by the author in his apparent response to censorship, the William Dean Howells edition honors authorial deletions. The Emerson edition does

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something in between: it accepts authorial additions but rejects "many of Emerson's other late changes." Within the Hawthorne edition itself, different volumes are edited in different ways. *The Scarlet Letter* essentially reproduces the first edition. *The House of the Seven Gables* reproduces Hawthorne's manuscript. *Fanshawe* does neither. Instead it purports to offer a reconstruction of Hawthorne's missing manuscript.

To accomplish this, Bowers studied Hawthorne's spelling and punctuation habits in *The House of the Seven Gables* (except those he had already normalized and modernized). He then postulated which usages in the first edition of *Fanshawe* must have resulted from compositors' corrections of Hawthorne, and rejected these in favor of what must have appeared in the missing manuscript. That Hawthorne's style or the styling requirements of his publishers might have changed in the twenty years separating the two books seems not to have occurred to Bowers. Nor does it seem to have occurred to him that Hawthorne, in common with other writers, might have welcomed or at least accepted his publisher's changes, letting them stand when he went over the proof sheets, not because they were accidentals but because he preferred them. But even if Bowers were right in his every supposition about *Fanshawe*, if he achieved with it what he claimed for his version of Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat"—"98 per cent perfection in reprinting what must have been the form and details of the lost manuscript"—the fact would remain that he had produced three different kinds of editions in three volumes of his Hawthorne edition.

These were the absurdities of scholars who distrusted scholarship and who, though they revered language, lacked historical reverence for the word itself. Mumford and Wilson mistook their antagonists when they made them out as crude and opportunistic. Yet in a curious way Wilson and Mumford were right to relate the American Editions to the Vietnam War. It was a period in which one characterized the style of one's opponent, and adopted an alternate style expressing contempt for him. On the one side, humanists, disgusted by the war, found a convenient target in scholars whose methods appeared to resemble the cruel efficiencies of the Pentagon. On the other side, academics opposed to the war frequently confessed past complicity with the military-industrial-university axis way of thinking. Others, more sophisticated, grew defensive about the relevance of their undertaking. Within the English profession, scholarship and new criticism, the two foundations of modern scholarly editing, came under the sharpest attack. Along with others in the profession, the scholarly editors retreated from scholarly values and a staunch championship of the writer's own language. The whirring heli-

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copter hovered over every sensitive person in the intellectual world of the late 1960s, drowning out reasoned discourse and sound scholarship alike.

The editors rightly label as anti-intellectual those attacks on them that simply express opposition to scholarly editing itself. Edmund Wilson weakened his case when he let himself appear to represent the mistaken notion that good taste and good intentions alone are required to edit books. These are not sufficient guarantees of success even when editorial problems do not arise. Leon Edel in his current selection of letters by Henry James, for example, admits that his decisions on which letters to include were partly subjective and partly meant to supplement his own biography of James. He then argues that scholars can photocopy the letters he has excluded, but fails to reveal the number and whereabouts of these. Instead of lending support to this sort of high-handedness, Wilson should have pointed to the Pléiade edition of Proust—a corrected, variorum version that is more complete than any other. There is no necessity to regard scholarship and commercial viability as incompatible.

A fine example of their compatibility, in fact, may be found in one of the American Editions, the *Writings* of Thoreau. Here good sense has overcome inappropriate theory. One of the editors, J. Lyndon Shanley, explains that Thoreau's style has *not* been tampered with. "To have regularized the many inconsistencies," he writes, "would have led to misrepresentation of the usage of Thoreau and his time, and would have concealed the fact that usage is always changing." The Thoreau volumes are indexed. And compared to the Hawthorne edition—described by one observer not friendly to Wilson as "a clumsy and pretentious piece of bookmaking"—these are compact and notably easy to read.

One further defense of scholarly editing should be mentioned: in many cases it leads to unexpected discoveries. The American Editions have resulted in new manuscript finds and in new identifications of authorship for a number of minor writings. Some of the historical essays accompanying each volume throw new biographical and critical light by tracing author-publisher relations in previously unpublished letters and unexamined records. These essays are likely to stand as the one significant accomplishment of the editions. However, most of the important errors in nineteenth-century American books were discovered by the 1940s, so the Center editors have been able to add but a few footnotes to the history of bibliographical discovery. As for their regularizing, modernizing, and mistaken readings, as well as their typographical errors—the truth is that these have proven disastrous only in terms of failed expectations. For in most cases the texts, though accompanied by

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introductions, appendixes, and notes, remain essentially the same as in earlier editions.

Recognizing this, Morse Peckham nevertheless has argued that "whether an edition has a high yield or not has nothing to do with whether or not it should have been done." As in a scientific experiment, the fact that a negative has been established should not detract from the respectability of the undertaking. But this argument calls for a distinction between bibliographic scholarship and scholarly editing: the former signifies study, the latter a certain kind of publication. Having bibliographically established the basic reliability of our old editions of American books, the editors need not have reported this discovery in the form of editions priced between fifteen and thirty-five dollars a volume and issued at a collective cost in excess of six million dollars. For the price of a few periodical articles, we could have learned that *The Scarlet Letter* contains "precisely two independent substantive emendations" and that "both of these turn out to be unnecessary."

A typical product of the 1960s, the American Editions lacked modesty of scale. In seeking the definitive, they failed at being adequate. One thinks of New York State's laughably overpriced Albany Mall; New York City's Lincoln Center, with the echoing acoustics of its Philharmonic Hall; Boston's John Hancock skyscraper, with its glass panels sucked off by the building's self-generated winds; the San Francisco Bay Automated Rapid Transit system, with equipment that fails even when personally attended. Like these other ambitious projects, the American Editions gradually displayed crippling flaws. Unlike the historical editions, most of them are selected, not complete, editions; they include no plans to publish authors' letters, for example. Further, it develops that they have failed at being definitive not only because of errors, but because of the physical impossibility of comparing and recording all the variants as demanded by copy-text theory. Critics have shown that, contrary to editorial claims, the Center editors do *not* compare all of the printings of each book. (A "printing" should be distinguished from an "edition." Books often go through four or five editions, each of which can have a half-dozen or more printings.)

As for errors, besides the inevitable ones of judgment and in proofreading, there are fresh errors in the paperback reprints by which the editors justified themselves when responding to Edmund Wilson. Despite elaborate rules for reproducing Center texts, for example, one of the few misprints that Bowers could label "significant" is restored to its incorrect nineteenth-century form by the paperback reprint of his text. In the opinion of one reviewer, the American Editions paperbacks have

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about the same accuracy as the Riverside Hawthorne—the popular nineteenth-century edition they supposedly are displacing. (Since the convenience of scholars is a major argument in favor of the new editions, it should be pointed out that scholars will have the inconvenience of changing their citations from the Riverside Hawthorne so they will refer to Bowers's new edition. Until completion of the new, they will have to cite from both editions, and afterward will still need the Riverside to check the work of fellow scholars who cited from its pages. Thus the arguments are many for sticking to the old edition. As for classroom use, with its explanatory notes and minimal textual emendation, Professor Harry Levin's *Scarlet Letter*, based on the Riverside, is equal to reprints of Bowers's version.)

The whole idea of a project intended to be error-free has an innocently millenarian, American flavor to it, presuming as it does not only that such a thing is possible, but that it is desirable. The opposite cultural assumption appears in the design of French telephones, it has always seemed to me. Expecting that things will go wrong, the French hook an extra earpiece to the side of the instrument, so that when power loss or interference develops this can be held up to the listener's other ear.

The historical editors, though most of them are free of the elaborate perfectionism of the American Editions, have not escaped a touch of the millenarian. Edmund Wilson's complaint about the time that it would take to publish the American Editions applies to the historical ones as well. For Jefferson's *Writings*, Boyd initially projected fifty-two volumes. With eighteen volumes in print, his estimate has grown to a hundred. Butterfield began in 1953 with an estimate of over a hundred volumes for his Adams Papers. On retiring in 1975, more than twenty years later, he and his colleagues had issued but twenty volumes. Even if his original estimate were to stand, at least eighty years would be required to complete the edition. So ambitious was the plan for the Adams Papers that, not surprisingly, the last several years have seen fewer and fewer volumes. The latest two cover but three years of the young Charles Francis Adams's lifelong diary. They mark the fifth and sixth volumes of this important but least interesting of the Adams diaries. With John Adams's general writings and political correspondence not yet begun, and with still no one working on John Quincy Adams, the Adams project has paid heavily in time for its successes. The net result of the Adams Papers, and of the other historical and literary projects, comes down to this: the guardians of our tradition have succeeded in keeping it out of print. Fewer of the writings of our eighteenth-century statesmen and nine-

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teenth-century writers are in print today than at the turn of the century. It is possible that more were in print at the centennial than will be at the bicentennial.

By the turn of the century or soon after, G. P. Putnam's had published, without subsidy, the writings of Samuel Adams, Franklin, Hamilton, Jay, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, Paine, and Washington. The Riverside Hawthorne text was still available, along with collections of James Fenimore Cooper, Emerson, Poe, Mark Twain, Whitman, and, a few years later, Henry James. All the editions had shortcomings, but none so great as the incompleteness of the present editions that have supplanted them. The contrast between the situation then and now suggests that the uses and the users of the nation's heritage have changed. The turn-of-the-century sets were purchased by gentlemen who thought it proper to have such volumes on their shelves. Today's volumes go to libraries for use by scholars. No commercial publisher thinks he can make money by issuing collected editions of American statesmen or writers—not even of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Faulkner, or T. S. Eliot.

Very possibly our traditions may be of direct use only to professionals and students, the rest of the population subsisting on historical novels, television dramatizations, and a few images of the past recalled from school days. On the other hand, if editors and publishers begin with this assumption, or something like it, no wider dissemination or deeper understanding of the tradition can be possible. There is no telling who will make use of sets of the American classics if they are made available inexpensively and in readable form. But if they are made only partially available, and if issued for the most part in unwieldy volumes and at great expense, they most certainly will have no general use. Yet the bibliographical scholars have a point when they argue that each time a slightly improved edition is published, the job only has to be done over again soon after it is finished.

I am reminded of a conference on housing in the underdeveloped countries at which Charles Abrams, the city planner, offered as his solution: "Build slums." He was thinking, it would seem, of cities like Brasilia which, despite its planners' care to avoid putting up inferior buildings, generated shantytowns that left those planners with the very problem they had set out to avoid. The partial, never-to-be-completed editions of American works are our Brasilia, and the occasional paperback reprints and surviving old editions imported from secondhand bookstores are their surrounding shantytowns. Abrams was suggesting, it seems to me, that everyone would be better off in jerry-built houses

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thrown up quickly and not meant to last more than twenty years. With the population housed, one could afford to let the planners start their utopias. Edmund Wilson's Pléiade, or something like it, should be undertaken for similar purposes. Unlike the planners, the scholars could continue their projects while the cheaper editions were coming out. The scholars could issue limited editions for one another, and donate the saved production costs to the slum editions.

Who knows but that the slums might develop some planning ideas for use by the master builders? Hyatt H. Waggoner's one-man edition of *The House of the Seven Gables*, for example, demonstrates how to utilize an author's manuscript without dogmatism or hoopla. Given the typographical errors in the American Editions, it may turn out that a single editor can do better than a team that reads proofs five times, as the present policy dictates. Let us have *all* of Emerson's *Journals*, then, just as he left them. Leave out both his wife's bowdlerizing and the present editors' painstaking reconstruction of his revisions. Who knows? Perhaps this method will turn out to yield a desirable edition. (The most that we are now promised is that, after completing the unreadable Emerson, the same editors will start on a clean text *selection* from it.) Let us have *all* of William Dean Howells, to see how the public likes it. Let us have Walt Whitman's books as he wrote them. No complete *Democratic Vistas* is in print because his editors have chosen to reprint the truncated version Whitman prepared just before his death. Let us have John Adams's writings on government, even though they often contain quotes without quotation marks; otherwise it will take a decade to check all the hidden references for an annotated edition. For such slums as these, many of us will gladly exchange our present dwellings.

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The Media Shangri-La

LEOPOLD TYRMAND

In old days men had the rack. Now they have the press. That is an improvement certainly.
—OSCAR WILDE, 1891

THE AMENDMENT WAS THE FIRST ONE, as early as 1789. Its idea, that anyone should be capable of saying whatever he wishes, was just and noble. Its wisdom, however, had been questioned since mankind's dawn. Since entering the path of evolution, man had nursed a primeval *angst* about the ability of the inadvertent word to conjure up evil spirits from naught. In the remotest ages, man knew that one should be very cautious with speech, whose careless handling could be as dangerous as its roguish restriction. Advanced civilization brought along half-truths, allusions, ambiguities, and propaganda—that is, arrant lies. Thus, although psychology today claims that it is more salubrious to shout down twaddle than to say nothing, my sympathies go to circumspection. Even with computers, we still become more often the casualties of fabrication than of reticence.

"Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press . . ." henceforth was to stand in writing forever. Throughout my life elsewhere, as an insider of communication by choice, passion, and profession, I had looked up to this canon with an unconditional awe. I saw it raped and soiled in Europe, and knew horrors that resulted from its murder. Coming to America meant, I hoped, embracing it like Holy Communion, with one's heart pure and one's tongue sensitive to the wafer's taste. Generally we immigrants are of two kinds: those who like everything here and those who like nothing. This distinction is muddled by our confusion in the face of a local feature, the American sense of democracy. It is a glory and its fruits are heartwarming, but one of its non-negotiable tenets has been bugging generations of us. We, of all hues, used to feel uneasy with democracy as the sacrosanct right to speak out when the one who speaks has only a very vague idea of what he's speaking

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about. Ceratinly we were underdeveloped in this respect, and with each passing year we progressively accumulated calluses on our souls. But at first glimpse, when newly arrived, both the naïve *paisano* and Albert Einstein tended to see in this phenomenon an unabridged-under-any-circumstances right to yap.

The unabridged freedom of the press is a relatively simpler matter, since, as A. J. Liebling said, it can be reduced to pondering about those who possess a printing press and hence enjoy this freedom. All in all, however, the freedom of the press has become mankind's blessing and democracy's ingenious fertilizer. Its pulsating power has made countries bloom—mainly those that never ceased claiming that their history is a continuous pursuit of liberty, justice, affluence, and fairness for everybody. Those were precisely the countries where freedom of the press, if granted, valiantly helped to rectify delusions, correct distortions, track down falsehoods, signal perils, and ferret out malfeasance. None has profited more from this liberty than America—that vanguard of latitudes—except, perhaps, for the American press.

Thus, the ominously growing conflict between American society and its communication media appears, at first sight, unmotivated by logic. If both sides have abundantly benefited from their mutual rapport, why should there be any antagonism between them? Nevertheless, to overlook a deepening rift would be myopic, since tension is in the air. It is also felt under the skin. It feeds on the perennial human longing for cogency, which makes it bubble up here and there on unexpected occasions. What is at stake is the very fate of the right to contradict, a prime element of our civilization, one that also conditioned the fantastic career of our free press. There are indications that the media, after having appropriated and mastered all the potentialities and subtleties of contradiction, are monopolizing them, so as to see that nobody will be able effectively to contradict the media. Since it is doubtful that our society will let itself be deprived of such a vital right, an increasing challenge, perhaps even colored with hatred, seems inevitable.

Hatred? A big word and one that should be used with restraint. But it is difficult to find another term for what many feel who have recognized the smell of despotism emanating from the media.

What is despotism? All slurs aside, it is the use of power for power's sake, and is rarely transmuted into any other value, even if the user strives to do so. Sometime during the sixties, it became discernible that the kind of power the media were seeking had already transcended the traditional areas of influence—politics, for one. Larger targets were sought, perhaps the American soul or the totality of the American life, so

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that either of these could be encompassed and shaped according to commandments that were never made clear, but no doubt existed. In the new reality that emerged, the ambitions of the media's chieftains and entrepreneurs might have been uncoordinated, even unconscious, yet they were keenly sensed by the object of their zeal, the great mass of the American people. To us in our century, despotism that invades the totality of life has a name: totalitarianism. Thus, it looked as though the American media, staunch enemies of any totalitarian encroachment in politics and social affairs, were about to generate a totalitarianism of their own.

Totalitarianism? A heavy charge again, but those who were busy conceptualizing the role of the media must have reckoned with its eventual development. When launching their campaigns of the decade, they vehemently insisted that the freedom of the press was a *totally* untouchable formula, a democratic taboo. It was, they said, the only unremovable element in a universe of exchangeable parts. Freedom of the press was America's freedom—beyond any normative control except that of public opinion; but it was never explained how public opinion, which in a democracy is by nature the media's own creation, could control the media. As a moral prime mover, the media claimed the people's right to know the truth—an honorable idea of service. Unfortunately, as we have all noticed, the difficulties of distilling raw truth in our world are manifold. So we have to assume that, like anyone else, the media are plagued by the woes of complexity, which ultimately make them serve not *the* truth but *their* truth, thus not what the people have a right to know, but what the media *want* them to know—and with so tremendous a might that it makes both verification and rejection futile. It has never been made clear why *their* defective truth has the right to limitless distribution while other defective truths are stifled in the name of their deficiency. In totalitarian Russia, the media's truth is most often an outright and infamous lie dictated by the government; Communist society, knowing this, rarely believes anything that is printed or broadcast—a clear-cut relationship between the informant and the informed. In America, the public has a gnawing feeling that no matter how unfettered and precise the press is, it never tells the whole story but only a part chosen by the press; this is called editing, the media's most sovereign privilege. So when Communist man is groping in the dark for the meaning of a lie, the American is groping among the blinding glares for the meaning of a truncated truth. He is deprived of any systemic means of revising the abuses caused by the nonentirety of information, reported fact, interpretation. This seems to have been a public feeling since the middle of the sixties—a feeling to which those who run the media react with a sort

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of *Roma locuta causa finita* attitude, wrapped up in pseudoconcessions. But even if the power to issue final verdicts on what is news and how things are is only a subliminal dream of the media people, and not an object of their conscious efforts, it is enough to frighten us, for it is a totalitarian dream.

In the democratic ethos, we try not to hate but rather to despise, scoff, disbelieve; bigots hate, but normal people are disgusted by something or can't stand it. In totalitarian countries, normal people hate in a way that the denizens of democracies are unable to comprehend. It is a dark hatred rooted in the necessity to live at the unmerciful mercy of those who hold an unassailable monopoly on governing, informing, and speaking out. Sometime during the sixties, a similar revulsion sneaked into the feelings of many Americans. The suspicion that "you can't beat them whatever you do," which seemed to have been forgotten since the pre-labor union subjugation to the company store, made its reappearance as the people took a stand against the gemmating power of the media. The lack of any confidence in what and how the media reported on crime, Vietnam, student unrest, the Black Panthers, permissive mores, and Watergate—coupled with the absence of any serious and sustained expression of opposite views—triggered in many people something stronger than disgust. The official beatitudes of the freedom of the press were trumpeted as articles of faith and the key to Americanism. And the more these were preached as our common good, the more obvious it became that not everyone can bask in them; that among all of us who are free to express ourselves, some are freer than others, and to such a degree that their freedom becomes our enslavement. Against this accusation, the editor barons would understandably reply that any limitation they imposed must be looked upon as a technicality, such as not enough space to present contrasting views, whereas any demand for checks and balances from them would signify an eventual collapse of liberty. But the appetite had been whetted first by the amendment and then by the preaching, and had been left unsatisfied; thus a promise was broken. It became clear that if truth is a victim of censorship in the totalitarian state, in America it falls prey to manipulations that breed bitterness, a sense of bondage, and, finally, hatred. Of course, the hatred can't be ascribed to too many—only those who care about accuracy and equity are tormented by it. This makes it a selective hatred that affects a minority, but despite proofs to the contrary, one is constantly surprised at how many intelligent and sensitive people in America are affected.

A question remains: Why is there so little knowledge of this hatred? Well, how can those who feel that free expression is a vitiated notion consistently voice their presence? They can do it sometimes with the help

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of politics, making the media-anointed candidates lose elections. They can make their presence visible through the media—"All I know is what I see in the papers," Will Rogers used to say. But if examples of media narcissism abound, there's no evidence of meekness, far less of rue, in their bearing. So why should they make it known that they are hated?

Among the statesmen who wielded executive power, Thomas Jefferson was the staunchest champion of freedom of the press. He was its ideologist, moralist, and apologist. "The press is the best instrument for enlightening the mind of man," he wrote in 1823. Had he lived today, such a persuasion would have made him outshine the most notorious pets of journalistic grace. Instead of the Galbraiths and Schlesingers, Jefferson probably would dwell in the pages of *Vogue* or *Esquire* as the purveyor-in-residence of opinions on war, sex, drugs, and child rearing. Yet he would be distinguished from the fashionable phrase-coiners for the demi-intelligent by his solicitude for honest thinking whatever its price, and by his refusal to accept intellectual modishness as independent judgment—little-known integrities in our days.

To Jefferson, a believer in a rational universe, freedom of the press was a functional idea: to serve in order to improve society, laws, the individual. As an optimist, he demanded the absolute freedom to serve and improve. "Where the press is free and every man able to read, all is safe," he wrote. Thus he either was unaware of, or just disregarded, the penetrating observation of Montaigne, made as early as the sixteenth century: that poking noses into the affairs of state, church, and the populace, together with the invention of printing, had become a new source of money and influence. Two years after Jefferson's death, Macaulay termed the people who made this a profession "the fourth estate of the realm" (which has since become a cliché) and attributed to them rather mean intentions.

An eighteenth-century man, Jefferson saw a smooth correlation between uninhibited reasoning and hopes for general betterment. A free press seemed to him the best vehicle for the former to achieve the latter. He believed that opposing views benefit one another, that the press should be vitally interested in an unrestricted, fair exchange in which conflict is an asset and contributes to the common wisdom. He trusted objectivity; an Encyclopedists' disciple, he had faith in its moral substance. To be objective in public life was for him the American ideological directive. "Fairness" and the "other" opinion were in his time still honored as tools of truth as well as of cultural heritage. Hence he would have been amazed at how the media, which had built their career upon constant invocation of these tools, had spun their own power from their

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perversion. He would feel worried that today's press, which unflinchingly deems itself a legacy of Jeffersonian virtues, neither thinks of an opposing view as an asset nor considers that contradiction enriches the common lore. Whenever the average journal is obliged to publish opposite convictions, it seems to feel wronged, as if it were paying a brutally extracted tribute. Deadly silence, it believes, is the best method of dealing with opinions its editors have no sympathy for. We may assume that Jefferson would think such an attitude more incomprehensible than ignoble: to him, transforming fairness from a value into a bureaucratic duty would probably appear an unpardonable loss. Certainly, he too was inclined to make remarks that today sound imprudent. "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter." This reveals Jefferson as an unprecise idealist. How a man who saw mankind as clockwork could preceive any advantage in such an arrangement remains a riddle.

Both Jefferson's ideology and his moral proposition have been corrupted. The American press, claiming that everything can and should be said but saying only what it wants to say, can be, at its mildest, accused of intolerance—a blow to democracy in Jefferson's eyes. If the Jeffersonian reverie was that a press would live by truth, the last hundred years make it look as if it had lived by carrion. The yellow press of the Theodore Roosevelt era, its truculence and vulgarity, was only a prelude. We have reached a time when virtues interest nobody and the media know it. Even the distinction between decorum and vice, which long galvanized the old tabloids, is out, unmarketable and unprofitable —and only a few can delude themselves that the media have *not* contributed the lion's share toward creating a social climate in which good is boring.

The idea of information as service has found itself at variance both with information and with service. Equating the detection of truth with the detection of everybody's failures, which is the press's most self-appreciated skill, is bringing about a primitive equity for policemen and felons, Republicans and Democrats, men and women, young and old alike. Yet it seems remote from what Jefferson and his colleagues, men of sober idealism, must have had in mind when they lavished that generous amendment upon us. All in all, the idea of information has been reduced to the attitudes of modern liberalism. The media embraced that liberalism with fervor, while the totalitarian mystique of the trade soon turned it into a left-liberal bigotry, so dynamic and rapacious that it became a socio-behavioral power.

By the end of Jefferson's life, and later, when Lord Acton and John

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Stuart Mill held sway, the word "liberal" meant "friend of freedom"; in our time, its meaning has been jumbled up. Indications multiply to suggest that when the media extol and swear by freedom, it is laissez-faire they have in mind, coyly ignoring that this term spells anathema to the American liberal.

To me, the arch sin of the liberal-journalistic alliance lies in that constant push to prefer standtaking over decency and correctness. There is a fundamental difference between honesty and the self-righteous taking of sides with what has been (without much scrutiny) proclaimed good, wise, and beautiful. America is cluttered with compulsive stand-takers, most of them faking their stances to conform with fashionable fads—those inveterate stand-taking fakers who would espouse any instant "good" cause. The American media first became the Spanish Inquisition on their behalf, ready to tear apart anyone who would dare debunk their poses, then discovered a financial fortune in those poses and became their giant incubator.

After Jefferson and the sentimental rationalists came Mark Twain, an empirical man, and this is what he had to say on ideology and morality: "The heaven-born mission of journalism is to disseminate truth; to eradicate error; to educate, refine and elevate the tone of public morals and manners, and make all men more gentle, virtuous, charitable, and in all ways better, and holier, and happier; and yet this black-hearted scoundrel degrades his great office persistently to the dissemination of falsehood, calumny, vituperation and vulgarity." This memorable comment seems to have been forgotten, whereas the Jeffersonian tales preserve their spell. A winsome, liberal senator, who argues for extending the First Amendment to television, declared lately: "Can a government be more responsible than its news media? . . . What do we have to fear from free broadcasting? Nothing. We have plenty to fear without it!" Apparently, we have not yet learned, over the last two hundred years, that these reputable and reasonable words convey something more complex than a simple verity.

Where can one look for the demarcation line (or meeting point) that separates (or converges) the disseminator of truth and educator of morals from the black-hearted scoundrel? I would answer: in that specious territory where news becomes opinion-forming. We have always known how gossip, unreal and unfounded, could shape reality. What the communication media in America, allied with the updated notion of publicity, have made out of this fact borders on magic.

The history of the American press is that, after a period of reporting facts, it has wound up creating phenomena. To understand this, we

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must draw a distinction between influence and creation. All through the nineteenth century, the press influenced United States history. Elections and wars, foreign policy and economy, mores and behavior were affected by its informing and interpreting. Nonetheless, the general cause-and-effect scheme held firm. In Twain's days, even the most daring dreams couldn't become reality by the fiat of the press. Gold had to be discovered in California before the press could report it to the nation and cause the gold rush to ensue.

The change came with the relentless development of techniques: the encroachment of photography upon consciousness, the pressures of the illustrated magazines on perception, TV with its ravaging of the popular imagination. Jorge Luis Borges noticed that contemporary man exists through photography; he is perpetuated on perishable slips of paper that convey his looks and flatten him. Evidently one who collects pictures, and distributes them among readers and watchers, can hold a hitherto unknown sway over human destinies; he becomes a giver of favors and condescensions on a vast scale. Pictures become information, while information becomes an instrument of fate in the hands of media lords who, at their will, can create or destroy ambitions and hopes.

Nowhere is the question of what's newsworthy so portentous as when the power of the media foredooms thoughts and ideas. The effort to inform about and appraise creativity and intellectual work is constantly lost in a mayhem of values with the consequence that meritless mediocrity, if not trash, is elevated sky-high. This is chiefly because the people assigned to inform and appraise are reviewers—that is, journalists feigning to be critics, whose only qualification for their jobs is their bosses' decision to place them there. The *New York Times,* a paper that can seal the fate of every play in America, employs a dance expert as its theater reviewer. Since drama is the realm of the spoken word, while the core of dancing is muteness, there can be no better example of the bizarre nonchalance with which the press molds culture, and thus reality.

The obtuseness of reviewing in America is so irresponsible and damaging that a motivation must exist for it. It can't be explained simply as scorn for the taste of the masses, or as a cynical admission that semiliterate gabble is the best-selling merchandise. Somehow the media appear interested in debasing criticism, which has for so long expressed the conscience of Western culture. Although criticism's moral guidance hinges on the independence of the critics, the media seek to hold a tight rein on critics by buying them and turning them into reviewers, and then displaying either their corruption or their feeble-mindedness. The central question that emerges is not "What is newsworthy and fit to

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print in order to inform the world about it?" but "*Who* decides *what* should be the object of information and *why* should the world be informed about it?" Once we get the answer, it will become plain how information creates reality and confusion.

Yes, we are now the most abundantly informed society in history, but does this mass of news make us the *best* informed? Does it result in our good, make us better? And who is the real beneficiary? The idyllic Jeffersonian beliefs make us chuckle nowadays. Besides, Jefferson himself must have had some premonition when he wrote, "The man who never looks into a newspaper is better informed . . . inasmuch as he who knows nothing is nearer the truth than he whose mind is filled with falsehood and errors." This was a speculative condemnation, of course. What Jefferson could not have known is how mighty processes can be put into motion, how obscure phenomena can be magnified and imposed upon the common consciousness with no regard to their moral worth.

We have come to know the *mobile perpetuum* of self-canceling values. The good brought about by the free press has had a price. The society has lost its say about what should be elevated to prominence and what ignored; it is impotent to affect the rise and role of those usurpers who now have that say; and it lacks an institutionalized insight into whether its genuine interests are taken into account. The world, with the media's assistance, has become so sophisticated that it can forgive any trespass to those it happens to like, but will destroy others it disdains just for some boorish mischief. Whom does the world like? Aren't they those who happen to be consecrated by the media? What are the criteria of such an eligibility? Well, the media loudly proclaim an ideological nonpartisanship and offer their services to people of all hues. They discard didacticism, maintaining that their only duty is to tell it to the people "like it is," yet we, the people, have an uncomfortable feeling that the "like it is" is determined by those who do the telling. Is this an illusion or a fact? No one knows for sure, even the media themselves, and we all find ourselves in a vicious circle which no one knows how to break (albeit the media know how constantly to enlarge its perimeter).

When Columbia University's infamous rebellion was practically over, scores of TV reporters and crewmen with heavy equipment hung around the mall for days. A professor once asked a TV man what he was waiting for; the latter answered that he was waiting for Columbia's involvement with reality. The professor invited him to come and see his class at its daily work. The TV man said disdainfully, "It's uninteresting." In the evening news, the professor saw himself on screen engaged in that conversation; he made a gesture of invitation, his collocutor wore a distinct expression of disgust on his face. An off-screen voice com-

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mented, "People are grim and restless, and hotly debate the issues. . . ." The professor confided to me later: "At that moment, I felt that we all perished in mystification. Correctness and exactitude were out of our lives once and for all. All I could do was helplessly hate those who created that absolute mess in which my authenticity corroborated a lie."

Norman Mailer once called this kind of reporting "factoids"—that is, "facts which have no existence before appearing in a magazine or newspaper, creations which are not so much lies as a product to manipulate emotions." He saw them as the yield of American contemporaneity, but their existential nucleus is ancient; only their consummation is of our time. Their essence is *pars pro toto,* a fragment of truth, a mutilated truth, a decomposed reality; not a lie but not truth either. Their moral aspect is organically ambiguous. Since their producer, the journalist, is a mortal and therefore bound to err, he should not be held accountable for harm done by inaccuracies. But to disperse them, he gets powers unsurpassed in the history of human progress. Neither science nor literature is immune to half-truths, but half-truths expire in both like weak bacteria. In journalism, they bloomed from the outset on, finally to become its yeast. The kneaded pseudotruth, or the smart imitation of the factual, has been preseasoned and prepackaged, and seems to be responsible for much of our recent civilizational madness, its unbridgeable social rifts and cultural lacerations.

In the last decade these processes, impenetrable to Jefferson's foresight, have become painful to those of us who are not afraid to reason. A weird surgery has been perpetrated daily on the American consciousness—and the English tongue. Why should a tidy little old lady who does not believe in welfare, and feels that democracy ought to defend itself against dictatorship, be called "pig" by a mob of untidy, wild-eyed detractors with their hackles up? And why should the American media, Twain's disseminators of truth, approve this grossly mauled semantics without bethinking; promiscuously project images of bedlam; and interpret them in a way which made millions helplessly grind their teeth? Factoid after factoid has corroded our sanity in the name of "the people's right to know," in full mockery of the amendment that once meant so well and then made us so defenseless a quarry.

Nowhere are the indignities of the factoid more salient than in dealing with crime—that arch-American scourge. By their very nature, the media are the grand recyclers of crime. Here we're in the clutches of determinism: reporting on crime is an obligation to society. Its luridness is considered a deterrent, yet its detailed prominence attracts novices. Sociologists, psychologists, and parents point to this gruesome ambivalence; the media's ritual response is that it is their duty. They tend to

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bypass the circumstance that reporting on crime is a financial bonanza. Whatever is to blame, crime is about to disrupt organized life in certain areas; thus the popular yearning seems to be an all-out social war on crime, any harshness included.

At this point, the media enigmatically part with society. Their avowed mission to protect the public from perils somehow wanes, leaving an impression that they are more inclined to champion the criminal's welfare than that of his victim. It would be false, of course, to claim that advocating lawlessness characterizes the tone of the media. But there is a chain of subtle reactions, a strategy of information and comment—even in movie reviews—that exposes how the impassionate, antididactic reporter turns into a passionate paladin of "humanity" and denouncer of "inhumanity," and how the murderer, not the casualty, proves to be the recipient of his inflamed compassion. This practice is supposedly dictated by social conscience, a faculty that transmogrifies the skeptical media into moralizers. The dialectic is based on the revelation that criminals are human—a classic factoid, of course, if called a discovery. Whenever there is a prison rebellion, the media, led by social conscience, adopted the position that whatever the inmates perpetrated before being jailed is always less immoral than the "inhumanity" they suffer in jail. In printed columns and over the air, it is suggested that perhaps punishment itself is a relic and that mankind should move on to new methods of dealing with wickedness and misdeeds. But which methods? Changing human nature would be one, and some outstanding specialists—Moses, Christ—tried it, but with meager results. Thus the media shun nature and prefer stale liberal precepts. Notable columnists hold forth on social conditions as the source of crime and never tire of producing turgid factoids on this point—which time after time are disproved by facts. They would never mention that the prison rebellion, by now an American folklore staple, is an offshoot of a latitude and permissiveness unheard of even in the most venerable democracies (the reason why no rebellions can be reported from there). Over the last quarter-century, the liberals and the press have had their way with crime in America, but neither expanded welfare nor the most lenient judicial and penitentiary procedures have brought anything but the wildest proliferation of violence. Man facing the media in this country cannot grasp why it was that Lady Macbeth and Raskolnikov had to atone fully for their sins, while a monstrous mugger, who atrociously killed old people for a couple of dollars, must be "rehabilitated." Everyone here knows that the deepest contempt for human life springs from rapacity and opulence, from big-time gangsterism and Murder Inc., rather than from penury and social malaise. Among the embattled people of Morningside Park and South

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Bronx, there is a hoary, rock-solid certitude that human nature itself is the cradle of crime, and that nothing better has ever been invented to cope with savagery and degeneracy than "cruel and unusual" punishment. The Founding Fathers might have thought otherwise, but they never saw carnage in the streets as means to satisfy drug habits.

The deviousness of the factoid is limitless. *Time* once reported how a black man in Detroit, in a fit of rage, killed his factory foreman and two other men. The story was peculiar in tone: the magazine did not condone the killing, but its social conscience extended to a comprehensive discussion of why this could occur in a racist sweatshop. Shortly thereafter I met on Broadway a *Time* editor I knew. When I conveyed my doubts to him, he replied, "The most amusing thing is that one of the victims was black too."

Amusing? Are opinion-making news and factoids entertainment features? They can be such, of course, in a civilization where attracting attention at any price is a multibillion-dollar business. I, for one, think they serve something larger than money, more overwhelming and formidable. Even as a complete manifestation of power, they are just a more conspicuous weaponry in an unfathomable armory at the disposal of discreet endeavors.

At the peak of nineteenth-century capitalism, in the plutocratic American democracy, the press was occasionally a proficient defender of the weak. It could discredit the powerful and the wealthy to the advantage of the poor and the wronged, and it often did so in an intrepid way. Later, this meritorious leaning was reflected in Hollywood movies about persons unjustly charged with uncommitted sins. Until the press became a party in the power game, the little people who needed protection could have been valuable allies. Now, having become the *primus inter pares,* the media no longer need alliances. The miserable ones still enjoy attention, but no longer is that protectorate impelled by spasms of idealism: the cause of want and desolation has always been a handy wedge for absolutist intentions. Once again, Jefferson, the egalitarian democracy buff, best delineated the one-way street that led to absolutism. "No government ought to be without censors; and, where the press is free, no one ever will," he wrote, correctly. No one who thinks decently would gainsay this wisdom. But, as with all wisdom, even the most unassailable has a way of turning into bitter irony. Could it be that Jefferson was truly unaware that staving off a tyranny may pave the way for another tyranny?

The verb *to censor,* as it is seen and used by the free press, is chameleon-like. When it stands for the activities of the press, it means a

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virtuous and venerable enterprise; when it denotes an attempt to examine the activities of the press, it spells criminal intention. Although everything indicates its robustness, freedom of the press in America is persistently presented by the press itself as extremely fragile, a brittle sacredness that must not be looked in the face; for a gaze not reverent enough can inflict irreparable damage. This is why any consistent debate on the press's nature and social role, though it can't be prohibited, is constantly and successfully inhibited. The believers in freedom and democracy are cornered by a syllogism: (1) the idea of the unhindered pursuit of truth and information is most beneficial to freedom and democracy; (2) the press is its best and only instrument; (3) therefore, any limitation or criticism of the press means catastrophe. If the first premise is right, the second premise and the conclusion are debatable. The stubborn refusal to discuss them turns them into dogmas and makes out of the free press a self-anointed pontificate.

But antidogmatism is still the keynote of American life, of which the free press swears to be the staunchest protector. Hence, in keeping with the American ideology, nothing should be exempt from control by experience and morality. Scrutinizing the press without abridging its freedom shouldn't be as impossible as the free press maintains it is, especially since the contemporary media have exceeded the pristine Jeffersonian ideals and now censor not only governments but the entirety of our existence as well. Thus the media's unbending refusal to grant us equal opportunity to censor them may transcend constructionism and turn into a clash between our existential needs and their privilege.

No good citizen should quarrel with censoring governments: such censorship is a praiseworthy and honorable occupation. In this direction, incisiveness and outspokenness should have no limits other than honesty and truthfulness. Up to now, the play has been fair. American presidents have been driven by the press to the verge of a persecution mania, while the press avoided screaming "Foul!" where there was no foul play. All this has changed of late. Intensifying the alarm decibels has emerged as a new journalistic industry of baneful capacities. In its handicraft era this practice was called muckraking, was considered hazardous, and was confined to fumbling in corruption and scandal. It evolved into a wheeler-dealing in human failings and mistakes, blown up out of proportion. Renamed the investigative Robin Hood spirit, it became as safe as bookkeeping and proved to be a mine of gold. Traditionally, human failings were the domain of religion, literature, and law. Journalism was supposed to report on them but not to judge them, whereas seeking financial advantages in them was held ignominious. Big money, how-

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ever, was always to be found in the never-ending warfare, in the continuous taking on of everybody by everybody, in the detriment feverishly inflicted by many upon many.

This is a sorry facet of America—something the journalist always knew and explored. But only recently has he found out that his meddling, risky in the past, is no longer so. The media have finally reached the stage where they could grant their foot soldiers virtual impunity. The amplification of their voices through airwaves and blitz-print made it possible to cover up almost any abuse—fallibility without atonement thus becoming a dangerous dexterity. The journalist then noticed that if he relentlessly sponged on shreds of actuality, and swiftly reported these with the help of propaganda gimmicks, he could present his work as a defense of values. Never before had windfall-profits, pseudo-outrage, and technology so well complemented each other to his benefit.

In the sociopolitical heat of the seventies, it has become an easy routine to dig out what someone has forgotten he said, or forgot to say; to tear words and facts from relevant contexts; and to put blame on people for their doings in places where they had not been. In our universal din, even the most precise dementi hopelessly drowns, while mendacious news long retains its taste as if preserved in brine. Thus the alert reporter in the movies, who once sought fame and money in rushing to the aid of the innocent victim threatened by dishonest evidence, now discovers how much more business and notoriety there is in piling up shaky evidence. Smelling blood, he embarks on his new ventures with disregard for any larger perspective on human affairs than his instant gain. What suddenly begins to count is the absolute glory of his trade, which he succeeds in identifying with democracy's mission. His zeal has little to do with ideologies and principles. His only moral shield becomes absolute freedom of expression—an end good for any means. In its name, he goes after every kind of spoils, regardless of the destructiveness, or the fraud, or theft necessary to obtain them.

The media's fight against the intelligence agencies gives us a good idea of the communication frenzy. The rationale for both adversaries is obviously the same. Both gather information about people and deeds that could endanger America, freedom, democracy. Both do this by violating privacy and justifying, even idolizing, ruse, swindle, extortion, and deceit. Nonetheless the media keep fiercely presenting the CIA as arch villain and public enemy. They succeed in making the general public accept such a gross mystification, and thrive on the CIA's inability to give tit for tat. Why the free media are bent on creating a logical morass in which a weapon that protects their liberty and prosperity sinks to the bottom remains a puzzle. Sensationalism seems too sleazy an answer;

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mistrust of a secret police, invoked as the supreme reason, sounds unconvincing. There is something somber and Orwellian in the background, something impossible to assess.

In order to make use of such an immense power, and solidify its grip over institutions and imaginations, a dire ultrafactoid has been invented. It works as follows: a high media executive makes an announcement, immediately forwarded through all channels of communication, to the effect that freedom of expression is badly needed in America. He doesn't state but implies that there can be *no* such freedom around if such an appeal has to be made. The mere fact that *he* can express himself freely has no chance to become an argument, since anyone who would want to point this out will be ignored. Instead, the executive's message is widely circulated, discussed, and quoted, and it soon has the desired impact. Everybody emphatically repeats how desperately freedom of the press is needed, just omitting the trifling fact that it exists and blossoms on every inch of American soil. The implication, not the truth, starts a life of its own. Political slogans are derived from it, people get inflamed, and whoever tries to prove its inaccuracy is labeled a reactionary. The truth is repressed by the media in the name of expansion of freedom. And freedom turns into license.

With a power to create something out of nothing, the media began, not long ago, to forge their own image—that of a weak, harassed entity whose performance of lawful service to the public is endangered by a brutal, omnipotent government. Exactly the opposite is true. The facts speak for themselves. Never in Western history has a shy, maladroit, diffident government, blundering and overcautious, suffered a more humiliating defeat at the hands of the press than in the case of the Pentagon papers. The media produced and put into motion Daniel Ellsberg, their astonishing artifact-factoid. A curious transfiguration took place: Ellsberg was a Goliath cast as David. He won with the media's formidable resources and in accordance with the logic of life rather than the Bible. He confronted a poor bungler—an inept government that went with a burglar's crowbar against the media's sophistication and, naturally, lost. The government took a degrading punishment and, on top of all this, was branded a losing Goliath, the mightier one, which of course it was not. But what can an elected government do against unelective brilliance combined with power? Mr. Ellsberg was the product of the new absolutism: he could never lose; even as a well-advertised martyr he would have made a fortune on lecturing. Yet he was implanted in the public consciousness as a victimized hero. In other times and places, a choice would have to be made to feature him either as a winner or as an ascetic self-sacrificer. Not in the America of the seventies, where what the press

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calls objectivity is mostly a lack of criteria. With this "objectivity" it is capable of fabricating a martyr and a winner rolled into one—using so suspicious a creation as Ellsberg to floor the American government.

What happens to governments worries me less; in democracies they are disposable. But the same pattern can be spotted in showdowns concerning more fundamental values. Why, by the end of the sixties, did the media give frantic backing to any vulgar cant presented as liberation of hitherto (allegedly) suppressed humanity? That question remains unanswered. Why did they put their might behind promulgating ugly licenses, recognizable with the naked eye as social plagues, when progress toward a better life is said to be their secret desire? Even more disturbing was their success in promoting smelly causes under lily-white banners. That was nothing new, of course. Journalistic prevarication has long been one of the most banal evils of our civilization. This time, however, the all-encompassing reduction of values was boundless. Disruptive triviality became natural or social process, gawky permissiveness became nonconformity, vulgarity became health, faddishness humanism, exploitative smartness revolutionary change—until these gross abuses turned into acceptable qualities. The old mischiefs of journalistic mendaciousness, so dear to Dickens and Twain, today are a new concept of credibility that frightfully hashes up worship with cynicism. It is no longer the raffish frolic of instant-use deceptions, in which shouting down a media critic is dissent while his protecting himself from assault is a suppression of opposing views. As of now, such simplisms are secondary; monumental fallacies get erected. The managing editor of *Time* says coquettishly in an interview, "We could never quite figure out whether or not we were part of the Establishment, and, if so, how to deal with ourselves." An absolutism firmly in the saddle begins to mince and simper. The Democratic Big Brother longs for love and camaraderie.

The unqualified support given by the media to the "anything goes"—in mores, fashion, behavior, styles of life, mass culture—resulted in deranging the social fabric through a reckless pogrom of criteria that heretofore had constituted the American ethos. Although not alone, the media were an eager executioner. Never in history has such a scale of reward been extended to youth as it was to the rock-syndrome heroes in exchange for their illiteracy of mind and heart—hustled as innocence and gnosis. And none of this would have occurred without the ardent assistance of the media. With the depletion of criteria, helped by the media, sexual snake-oil peddling came to mean nonconformism. Actually, it meant a menial subservience to shlocky "philosophies," reproduced in millions of copies—thereby constituting a brutal, massive

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supremacy, not an imaginary "underground" challenge against a trumped-up "oppression" of identity and instincts.

An old totalitarian gimmick, polished to perfection by both communism and nazism, has been applied efficiently. A lie, frequently enough repeated, doesn't turn into truth, but it survives, and after a while no one is really capable of telling the true from the untrue. Being free, the American press has put this trick to a more sophisticated use than the totalitarians ever did. Instead of obtusely repeating the same lie, the press produces endless versions of it, in which a meretricious slide projector automatically supplants the previous one. Whenever the *New York Times* wants to please the jaded elite, or cater to the interests of publishing and advertising, it just labels the subjugation of the weaker to the stronger a heroic stance taken by those dedicated to fighting for unpopular causes. The *Times*'s unsurpassed hegemony frees it from pointing out such details as who or what persecutes the persecuted, and enables it to bestow the term nonconformism upon certain causes. Its columnists can consequently feel like fearless crusaders—which they are not, since in this society of ours Grundyism and prudery are no longer adversaries and a white knight who combats a cockroach is ludicrous.

Challenging governments, legislatures, traditions, notions of ethics, and above all common sense should also bring out hazards and dangers. The media desperately want us to believe that is the case. But it is not. Their bravery and undaunted readiness to sacrifice are a myth, a blatant fib, warmed up with obtrusiveness at every opportunity. Their victorious absolutism eliminated any jeopardy a long time ago; the most romanticized campaigns are played as safe as a TV crime show. The story of Daniel Schorr, a CBS correspondent whose work seemed so annoying to the administration that it put him under FBI inquiry, properly attests this. The media exulted over the affair. They saw in it the symbol of their sufferings, gallantry, and boldness; their man's valor, the government's hideous yoke. And this is what Mr. Schorr had to say: ". . . If something happens to you so as to single you out . . . it helps to make you more salable. I've calculated that the FBI investigation of me, together with my being put on the Administration enemies list, has been worth a hundred thousand dollars to me, through lecture fees. . . . People would say, 'You're very brave,' and I don't know what they were talking about, really. I was not in any imminent danger of anything, and I had a big corporation behind me."

The more powerful an institution, the more hypocrisy—this can be termed a law. Sometime in our century the towering press institutions climbed to altitudes of peremptoriness, heights from which it became a

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child's game to impose upon everybody opinions not shared by everybody. And so the last vestiges of objectivity dissolved in a sea of hypocrisy. The *New York Times,* CBS, *Time,* the *Washington Post* felt called upon to distribute the maximum of non-negotiable truth; by determining both the truth and the maximum they acquired the franchise for a coolly calculated irresponsibility. "The press, like fire, is an excellent servant, but a terrible master," J. Fenimore Cooper once wrote. But terrible masters are hated. So how to avoid hatred yet retain absolutism, the mega-freedom of the freest among all? How to escape the unauthenticity of moral claims? The growing sensitivity gap demanded correction, and this is where hypocrisy smoothly came in.

In a democracy, the perpetuation of power, a touchy matter, is subjected to the metaphysics of error. In politics, business, culture, and administration, errors have to be paid for. The media's errors, of untruthfulness, false information, or supporting a wrong cause, are free of charge—occasionally admitted but never expiated. Dealing in a commodity whose substance is interpretation enables the press easily to survive blunders—to ignore them, not to set them straight, or to correct them, when forced by law, in a way that can minimize even the worst inaccuracy. It has the subtle knowledge of how to concede an error or abuse but never in adequate proportion to the error or abuse committed—thus evading guilt and achieving impunity. Governments can be defeated by ballot, public misconduct by courts, courts by other courts. And this is why legislators and crooks, officials and wrongdoers, lawyers and embezzlers may be despised in a democracy, but rarely hated. They are vulnerable and removable, hence within the practical reach of public vengeance. But the media are *beyond* the practical reach of anyone. Deciding who stays on the stage and who leaves, while they keep the stage forever, gives them an air of invincibility that seems unpardonable to all those to whom democracy is instinct, intuition, and an elusive promise of something better.

Should journalists, the practitioners of these wiles, be summarily branded as ripe for damnation? "They are, like all other human beings, sheep-like, and docilely accept any nonsense," H. L. Mencken, their foe, wrote about them. Since his ascension in the Western world, the newspaperman, as he was seen by Defoe and Balzac, Hogarth and Daumier, enjoyed the reputation of a cheerful liar. His fibbing, cheating, and hustling were taken for granted and considered rather hilariously charming. "Sir, I have been through it from Alpha to Omaha, and I tell you that the less a man knows the bigger the noise he makes and the higher the salary he commands," wrote Mark Twain, no mean connoisseur. But on his way to our time, the journalist amassed erudition, then hypoc-

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risy. Exactly there, in that pernicious mist, he found and established his self-righteousness and sanctimoniousness. And these were no longer the clever schemes of a genial faker, which society could meet with amused forbearance. When it became clear, in the bewildering complexities of our civilization, that truth does not speak for itself, behemoth enterprises were set up to make money out of this fact. Thus, no one can answer the question, Is the media's *raison d'être* gathering information or selling information? Credibility becomes money, and we all know about the miracles of credibility demanded of us all. When it comes to cereals and sport events, credibility is not important, but when war, peace, freedom, and justice enter the scene, what can protect credibility from the illicit temptations of the media, its highest priests?

A hazy feeling plagues many who regularly read newspapers and magazines and watch TV. They sense a duplicity in media reports, an unspecified conformity with some preordained recipe. But which recipe? Prescribed by whom? Administered in which way and in whose name? There are no answers, but that doesn't cancel the questions. He who asks knows, on seeing one of the century's most monstrous criminals addressed in the *Times* as "Mr. Manson," that he is morally short-changed for reasons of a hollow pseudo-fairness. But the *Times,* I guess, doesn't care how its own brand of hypocrisy and conformism is seen from the other side of human sensitivity. Therefore, when its managing editor promotes the contemporary porno-chic by saying with finesse, "People want it nowadays," to some this seems a well-synchronized topicality and to others professional acumen, but to many it just sounds intolerable. And how sad it is to realize who loom as *people* in the perception of the *Times*'s helmsmen, for this word has lost its meaning. Both the California grape pickers and those who dance at Manhattan cocktail parties for their strike funds vie for the people label. The *Times* would be the last to insist on precision. Many readers ask themselves every morning, "Why is the *New York Times* so hellbent on destroying America? What interest does it have in poisoning America's civilization and dismantling its political system?" Of course, this is a reader's mirage. What ax to grind against America could this journal have? Why would its editors and publishers want to demolish a reality in which they enjoy an unprecedented influence and prestige? There is no reason why the *Times* should be against America, but nonetheless many think it is, and such an impression forms when they read its text. It is a very specific and undeniable hatred.

To dissipate this hatred, a halfhearted effort is made by the press—an effort perverted by the indomitableness of absolutism and its innate hypocrisy. An open sesame, the Letters to the Editor, has been in-

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stalled to assuage the wounds of those who crave instant justice. It is the most avidly read part, where everyone is looking for a man after one's own heart. Why there? Because only there can the confirmation of oneself be found. Unfortunately, it is a manipulated heaven, quite often transformed into parody, where ingenuity makes cunning look as if it were all spontaneity and fairness. It is best observable in the national newsmagazines, where the outlet for disagreement smoothly turns into a perpetual promotion of editorial omniscience and probity.

Eminence is conditioned by inaccessibility—this simple verity makes a published letter an honor. Since the editor's arbitrary will is the sole deciding factor of what appears in print, the letter with the best chance is a rehash of the magazine's sloganeering. In routine controversies, an equal number of pro and con letters is printed, regardless of the actual ratio—plus a pun or a bit of doggerel. This proves that the magazine knows about truth's two faces, the rights of the minority and sportsmanship. The fact that a magazine's position has been disapproved by its readers remains invisible. But sometimes, during major controversies, when there is an overflow of protest, the real subtlety comes to the fore: the magazine prints a lot of chiding and condemning, seeing to it that those letters are dialectically inferior and badly written, while miraculously the few supporting letters are articulate and sensible. One would assume that, to obey Jefferson, the free press would cherish a lively dialogue, but not so. It prefers tactics: stupidity in its pages intimates an open door to ordinary folks; the wily deprecation of the adverse view is just another point scored. "We are an objective and democratic press institution and believe in the general right to speak out for everyone," an editor of a national newsmagazine told me once. "We can do nothing against the general dullness."

The premeditated loophole induces no risk. Any lie, or just bias, repeated at a ratio of a hundred copies to one protesting letter, is a victorious lie or bias. The real source of the media's monopoly is the formidable power of repetition, *totally* reserved for them. An opinion must be incessantly sustained to become earth-shaking—or simply correct. We can imagine Copernicus writing letters to editors announcing that the planet is round, and having only one published. Should the media, for some reason, have preferred to claim that it is flat, Columbus wouldn't have set sail till now.

Once there were Federalist papers and Democratic papers, Whig papers and Populist papers; abolitionist, conservative, independent, Republican, and liberal papers. They discussed positions and issues, sometimes in a way that Twain understated as "vigorous" in his "Journalism

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in Tennessee." Then the newspapers decided not to represent particular persuasions. Instead they promised to report evenhandedly on all of them and their controversies. They thus introduced the tutelage of impartiality, which endowed editors with the power to determine which position should be brought before the public eye, and how vigorously. The diversity of opinion would not be lost, the press assured us, since such a system would best expose every shade of opinion.

Even if the press honestly believed what it said, the results were meager. Not only did the papers acquire a limp, listless tone that they called objectivity—as unpalatable as any fanatical partisanship—but, first and foremost, discussion was dead. A civic debate makes sense when it is restrained by nothing but reason and comity. It becomes futile when it is regulated by a self-imposed sponsorship that impedes genuine dissent but is ready to sell it as a daintily packaged product.

Most American principles and institutions are the progeny of the eighteenth century, when readiness to die for anyone else's right to voice disagreement was a useful imperative. Something happened to this tenet, and now scientists can't speak up at Harvard and Yale if their findings do not bow to the intellectual terror. The press has silently accepted the handy wisdom that the best argument is that which shares its own point of view. A clever tokenism is put to work: the most exposure is given to what enhances the press's reputation of unprejudiced fairness without endangering its gospels. At the same time, dangerous opponents with invincible data are effectively barred from public sight.

The death of discussion is a bizarre phenomenon. One refuses to believe that groups of bright people who live by the agility of their brains and fiercely compete for money have nothing to say about one another's ideas, suggestions, convictions, and errors. It is inconceivable that *Time* never found a mistake in *Newsweek*'s political reasoning, that CBS couldn't spot inaccuracy in NBC's reporting, that the *Washington Post* never had any objection to the *New York Times*'s stance. The fact that all these sources may voice differing opinions does not make up for the absence of polemics. There is a basic divergence between reporting on—or gathering on the same page—opposing opinions and a clash of opinions. Both truth and the common cause benefit from the clash. And the lack of polemics leads to a variety of suspicions. It suggests that inasmuch as the press is free from an external encroachment, its separate entities may not be free from one another, or may adhere to a mysterious code. Conspiracy—the pub politics' versatile gadget—comes naturally to mind, but the idea of a Sanhedrin somewhere in Manhattan that determines an official line is naïve. Kafka taught us that disjointed

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infrastructures form secretive powers, not well-organized centers of decision. There is no need for a conspiracy to originate a monopoly; a unity of means and purposes in the service of itself would do. It took the bloody atrocities of the totalitarian movements to enforce the unanimity of their communication system in the name of faith and orthodoxy. The American media achieved like-mindedness by entrenching themselves as a separate power in the name of freedom and variety of opinion. This cartel of solid, preordained thinking is a threat to democracy, all the worse because it occurs in its name, speckled with bogus paraphernalia, democratic in word but not in spirit. In communist countries the press calls itself democratic too, but everybody knows it's a put-on. In America the press *is* democratic, but no one knows exactly why or how. Democracy is in trouble when even a right opinion is voiced in unison, while any exception taken to it is passed over in silence, and dissent is stifled with lawful gimmicks. How can we know it is right when there is such a deafening outcry that it is right? We can't, but the newsman, this superscout of the Western world, finds in the uproar his righteousness, his immaculateness, his apostolate and advocacy; which brings him directly into the liberal bigotry.

How did the monopoly of the media become a liberal monopoly? The answer is in the undercurrents of history. Half a century ago, the press, in the hands of the upper-class libertarians proud of their heritage, or plebeian upstarts sensing the profitability of compromise, was sprinkled with militant liberals who waged fierce and hopeful wars and whose right to fight the Establishment from inside was considered immutable. They were tolerated not only because of Jefferson, but also for snobbish reasons. To employ a dissenting liberal was an act somewhere between patriotic virtue and elegance; having a subversive on one's own staff attested to the house's class and decorum. In this tradition, plutocratic foundations still provide big money for left-radical art and science, and the military-industrial complex invites Marxist professors to its conferences. But before anyone realized it, the liberals were in force, and tolerance turned out to be a nuisance. Believing in their exclusive rights to morality, liberals see nonliberals as enemies rather than adversaries; the liberal sapience, complete and axiomatic, needs no nourishment in the competition of views; they want no exchange and nothing from the other side's ideas. In fact, they are not interested in antiliberals as humans, only as Evil. Thus, tolerating the wickedness of an inferior intelligence would be nonsensical. But their omnipotence notwithstanding, America does not yet seem ready for an unadorned monolithic liberalism, or liberal intolerance, both highbrow constructs. Something must be plastered on the monolith to camouflage intolerance.

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So we were asked to accept the Op-Ed page as a model of free and unrestricted discourse, a lively tournament of ideas. But it is not. It is dissent under control, a strictly regulated broad-mindedness. I believe that an honest editorial outburst against the conservative point of view—which vegetates on the fringes of the American culture, dwarfed by the aloof snubbing of the liberal giants—would better purify the atmosphere than all the manifestations of the *Times*'s hospitality to "any" opinion. Diversity of opinion is not equated with freedom of expression, and even less with the exchange of ideas. Only a day-by-day defense of an ideology makes it a force in contemporary life. In the Letters to the Editor section and on Op-Ed pages, it just aimlessly flickers as in a void. The *Times*, by offering its forum to a conservative spokesman, only demonstrates an ostentatious toleration, since his remarks are rarely given the substance of a polemical acknowledgment. Perhaps to disperse these doubts, the *Times* employs a conservative columnist. His daily chores look more like a hired impertinence than a consistent effort to defend a *Weltanschauung,* chiefly because he has never been graced with a dialogue.

Pluralism has a *conditio sine qua non:* equilibrium of forces. Battles are fought out, but no hegemony gets established; for once it does, there is no longer pluralism, only its external trappings. By successfully identifying their freedom with freedom, the media have come closer to a hegemony than any element in this society, and neither the elective government, nor religion, nor big money can do anything about it. Once there was a belief that the free press was a self-regulatory mechanism, governed by free-market principles: not good, not bought. We know now that this is not true. A monopoly has imposed its rules, while the sturdy historic American tendency to break monopolies has become bogged down in sophistry this time. A dispute has been going on since the First Amendment, and only one specious dogma has reached the general awareness: that we can monitor everything from food to air quality, except the quality of the food for popular thinking. An obvious violation of the amendment, whose essence is that *everything* can and should be amended if need be.

It all boils down to a choice. Either the free press will correct and censor itself by the open competition of variegated ideas, not bank accounts; or it must accept social supervision. The media argue that even if accused of stealing, extorting, assassinating character, they were always proven right on war, peace, freedom, justice, and democracy. Even if it is so, what if once in the future they should be wrong? Where, in our reality, are the tools of mind and integrity that could detect their failure, prove it, and salvage our civilization if the media should oppose them with all the unbreakable power of endless casuistry? De Tocque-

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ville wrote: "The hallmark of the American journalist is a direct and coarse attack . . . which has no weight with the readers. . . . What they look for in a newspaper is knowledge of facts, and it is only by altering and distorting those facts that the journalist can gain some influence for his views." It is not as accurate today as it was in his day, and may it not remain so forever?

What has been said up to now sounds overly sinister, one-sided, biased—an injudicious pamphlet devoid of evenhandedness and moderation. It can of course be read as such. But my sinful prejudice, when put into proper perspective, may turn out to be a high journalistic virtue. Freedom of the press was and is the jewel of Western civilization, the noblest guardian of the noblest concept of democracy. Anything that could have been said of its grandeur and merits has been said countless times by trustworthy authorities on morality and knowledge. And in the largest sense I humbly perceive in this freedom a magnificent treasure. We all know, too, about relativity: the free media are an inevitable evil that serves good, and a humanistic boon that can't avoid wrongdoing. These are not news any longer.

So what's news?

"Good weather is no news," a TV high executive once said, "but a tornado that levels a town is."

He's right. In the same vein, a train on schedule is no news, but a catastrophe is, while a resounding warning that a catastrophe may happen should be a big scoop, salutary to everybody. And who approaches tornadoes and catastrophes with evenhandedness and moderation?

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Fragments from Lucilius

Translated from Book III Satire I of Lucilius's Sicilian Journey

by Philip Murray

(A letter to a friend describing a journey from Rome to visit his estates in southern Italy and Sicily, circa *120 B.C.)*

You would have taken part of the renown,
You would have shared our joys.
We looked long at our maps before setting out:
Besides the road to Capua was impossibly muddy.
I rode a fractious yearling filly;
My baggage pressed heavily upon her ribs.
The Appian Way was all fun, up and down;
We were at ease, joking and laughing;
But the boundary of Setia—that was hard work,
Mountains for goats, like Aetna or rugged Athos.

At Capua we took a rest we sorely needed,
'Til a street fight livened up our leisure.
The jut-jawed cowboy with his buck tooth
Was like a little rhinoceros. His mother
Didn't bear him; I think she vented him.
His crony had one eye and two feet, like a halved pig;
Rhino could knock the wind out of One-eye;
He had already torn feathers from his rival's crest.
He rushed in again and came off unhurt;
Breathless, panting, they fought to a bloodless draw.

We sailed past Cape Capanella, Minerva's headlands;
And then to Salernum; four hours later
The river Silarus and its port Alburnus;
Our oars brought us to Palinurus by midnight.
My Syrian hostess put on her shoes,

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"The slaves will split fire-wood. See to it."
The simplest fare was served. There were no oysters,
No giant mussels, and no asparagus;
Cabbages and bitter herbs were almost honey.
But the belches that deflated us were sour.

Grinning, we gaped, and stuffed ourselves;
We turned the wine-flagons upside down
And our wits with them. I woke at dawn,
Shouted to the boys; we sailed from Palinurus.
It's a long way from Capua; bi-lingual Bruttians,
The straits, Messina, the walls of Regium;
Then the Liparian Isles, and the Temple of Diana,
Even Stromboli by night, showers of sparks,
Like the Forum decked out with lamps for the games,
All you have often wished to see; envy me.

PHILIP MURRAY is the author of *Poems After Martial*.

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Science and the Common Man

PAUL A. CARTER

"A MAN IN A FADED GRAY RAINCOAT and a flopping black felt hat that nearly concealed the gray hair that straggled over his ears stood on the boat deck of the steamship *Rotterdam* yesterday, timidly facing a battery of cameramen. In one hand he clutched a shiny brier pipe and the other clung to a priceless violin." Thus on a spring day in 1921, with the Harding administration not yet a month old, America was introduced to Albert Einstein. Reportedly not fluent in English, the shy, shaggy-locked visitor shook hands all round but gave no verbal interview. Newspaper reporters had to content themselves with physical description: "Under a high, broad forehead are large and luminous eyes, almost childlike in their simplicity and unworldliness." After he got ashore, correspondents competent in German took down his remarks, and a story duly appeared in the next morning's *New York Times:*

Einstein Sees End of Time and Space

. . . . . .

Destruction of Material Universe
Would Be Followed By Nothing,
Says Creator of Relativity

. . . . . .

Theory "Logically Simple"

The destruction of the material universe had no great journalistic urgency, and even in the *Times* this account was relegated to page 5. The front page was devoted to more immediate matters: "Talk in Ireland of Peace and War"; "Harding Summons Rail Men's Leaders"; "Illinois Legion Protests Against Release of Debs"; and—familiar enough reading for a Manhattan resident, then or today—"Two strangely shot in Madison Square Park; one of five bullets hits choir singer on way home from church . . . police unable to discover who fired the shots and why." Car dealers in Greater New York reported good spring sales, and baseball fans looked forward to the new season. Yet the gentle visiting scientist was not lost in the shuffle. Thousands of New Yorkers turned

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out to greet the Einstein party at the pier, and some of them crowded into City Hall afterward for Mayor Hylan's reception.

Einstein himself seemed puzzled at the public interest shown in him and in his theories. Relativity did have some bearing on ultimate philosophy, the savant acknowledged, puffing on his pipe, but "the practical man does not need to worry about it." For some Americans, interest in his scientific theories merged into enthusiasm for the political cause he championed. Traveling in company with Chaim Weizmann and other Zionist leaders, Einstein was in this country to enlist American support for the yet unborn state of Israel, and more specifically for the establishment of the Hebrew University on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The *Chicago Tribune* picked up a cable from Germany that gave the Zionists' mission an ugly urgency: Rudolph Leibus, a fanatical nationalist, had recently urged the murder of Einstein, and paid the equivalent in marks of a sixteen-dollar fine in a Berlin court for saying so. On New York's own city council, Alderman Bruce Falconer refused to vote the scientist the freedom of the city—the usual formality—and his vote prompted a shouting and fist-waving session on the council floor. But Falconer denied being moved by "racial or religious prejudice"; his private physician was a Jew and many of his friends were Jews, the lawmaker asserted. Three days later he found fresh justification for his vote on the ground that Einstein had been born in Germany, with which the United States—more than two years after the armistice—was still technically at war. Therefore, pacifist and internationalist though he was, the physicist "might be regarded as an enemy alien," the councilman explained.

If Einstein was ruffled by this teapot tempest, he showed no sign. A German-speaking *Times* man sought out the Einsteins in their New York hotel and found the physicist bubbling with enthusiasm for America: "I like the way you light up the windows with the signs. I like the cheerful way you arrange the electricity up and down the streets. . . . And the movies? I am enthusiastic about them. . . . In general, the pictures shown now are not so artistic, but they will get better, very much better all the time."

Midway through the conversation, Mrs. Einstein, whom the reporter described as "a charming little gray-haired lady," slipped in and sat down in a chair beside her husband. Perhaps the interviewer would like a copy of Einstein's book on relativity in an English translation, she suggested.

"No," said the professor. "Why that? He doesn't come here for relativity. He comes here to see me."

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Other Americans, some of them having even less knowledge of relativity than the *Times* man, came in droves to see Einstein. They jammed the Metropolitan Opera House to the doors when he and Weizmann appeared there. They rode on the subway uptown to Columbia and to City College to hear Einstein lecture on relativity, in German and in halting textbook English. He journeyed to Princeton (later destined to afford him refuge from Hitler's tyranny) to receive an honorary D.Sc. He went to Washington for a meeting of the National Academy of Sciences; again speaking in German—a language, we must remember, that had been banned throughout much of America only three years earlier—Einstein voiced his hope "that the field of activity of scientific men may be reunited and that the whole world will soon again be bound together by common work."

While in Washington, he visited President Harding at the White House, prompting a headline: "Einstein Idea Puzzles Harding, He Admits as Scientist Calls." The puzzlement was bipartisan. Into a windy Senate debate on April 18, the flowery-tongued, white-mustached Democratic Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi interpolated a comment on the theory of relativity: "I frankly confess that I do not understand Einstein; I frankly confess that I do not believe the Senator from Pennsylvania understands Einstein; . . . and I do not believe that even the Senator from Massachusetts [Henry Cabot Lodge, with his Harvard Ph.D.!] would make a very positive pretense in that direction." But such expressions of bafflement were curiously mingled with affection. The *New York World* was struck by the fact that of all the recent distinguished visitors from abroad, including the Prince of Wales and Queen Marie of Romania, the one who inspired the most spontaneous popular demonstration had not been "a great general or statesman but a plain man of science. . . . It is something when New York turns out to honor a stranger bringing gifts of this recondite character." Nor was it all vulgar curiosity toward a celebrity, the *World* believed. The public was engaging in "a sincere tribute of admiration to the physicist who, amid the turmoil of war and the distraction of material interests, has kept his mind fixt on the star of pure science."

Certainly Einstein's personal style was different from that of his American colleagues, as portrayed four years later by the *Independent* under the caption "Must Scientists Wear Whiskers?": "The fact is that in America . . . a convention of scientists, such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science annually brings together, is as clean-shaven, as youthful, and as jazzy as a foregathering of Rotarians." The author of the "Special and General Theories of Relativity" hardly

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fitted that stereotype of the scientist, "fully as much a man of the world as his brother, the business man." Indeed, Einstein's unworldliness may have been part of his charismatic appeal—especially considering that few then had any inkling where the harmless-looking equation $e = mc^2$ would lead.

"I have only two rules which I regard as principles of conduct," Einstein told an American journalist who traveled to Berlin nine years later to write him up for a popular U.S. magazine. "The first is: *Have no rules.* The second is: *Be independent of the opinion of others.*" For many Americans with no idea what he was talking about, Einstein's stubborn insistence upon going his own way had a familiar ring. In sixteen words he had summed up the self-reliance theme of Ralph Waldo Emerson. Ignoring his socialism and his mathematical rigor, the American businessman and the American bohemian could unite in admiring the man as a rugged individualist who was doing his own thing.

Perhaps also in the decade of the twenties, Albert Einstein, with his disarming simplicity and his concentration on goals transcending the corruptions of his time, filled a psychic need for some Americans in much the same way as did two other seemingly simple men, Charles Lindbergh and Calvin Coolidge: the Swiss-German-Jewish seer may have been another kind of puritan in Babylon. Einstein's own obvious enjoyment of America was surely not unwelcome news for Americans, and his Zionism itself may have appealed through its kinship with puritan and pioneer traditions in the American past, however much America's own intellectuals in the twenties condemned both puritanism and the frontier.

II

Not everyone loved Albert Einstein. One year after that triumphant first visit, even while American astronomers were making their way toward a desolate spot on Australia's northwest coast to observe a solar eclipse—and, they hoped, to confirm or refute Einstein's most recent theory—that theory's author was forced temporarily to flee for his life from his homeland. Members of the same extremist group that had recently murdered Walther Rathenau, Germany's foreign minister, were threatening the same fate for Einstein and other prominent German Jews, including Theodor Wolff, editor of the *Berliner Tageblatt,* and the Hamburg banker Max Warburg. Passing over the fact that the cruel ideology then surging upward in Germany rarely excused its chosen enemies for their mild behavior, the *New York Times* expressed surprise

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that anybody should want to assassinate Dr. Einstein. "He is gentleness personified, and it is incredible that he ever gave anybody any of the ordinary forms of offence." But perhaps the form of offense Einstein gave was not ordinary. That he was Jewish may have been less important than that he was incomprehensible.

According to another *Times* editorial, "The Declaration of Independence itself is outraged by the assertion that there is anything on earth, or in interstellar space, that can be understood only by the chosen few." *Self-evident* truth was what the Declaration had proclaimed, and some apparently felt that this must be the case not only in politics but also in science. "Newton's law of gravitation can be stated in a few simple sentences, and its essentials can be made clear to the average reader," complained Charles Lane Poor (himself a professor of celestial mechanics) in 1924. "The theory of Einstein . . . is, on the contrary, complicated in the extreme; it cannot be expressed in words. It is impossible to read the works of Einstein and his followers and from their words and phrases to know what they really mean." The implication was obvious: if a theory cannot be made clear to the general reader, it is probably invalid. In a democratic age, common sense was felt to be the property of common men.

Also, from the time of Francis Bacon to the time of Thomas Huxley, scientists themselves, whether aristocrats or democrats, had drummed it into the mind of Western man that science is "organized common sense." As a weapon against doctrines judged to be contrary to common sense—such as those of the Church—that slogan had at times been highly effective, and advocates of science were understandably reluctant to give it up. Therefore, to some conventional minds, the abstruse higher mathematics in which the new physics was phrased became the modern equivalent of religious mumbo jumbo. One *Times* reader in 1922 expected a "battle royal to be waged between men of science, of which one class will fight with the brilliant and dazzling arms of mathematical formulae and the other with the dull yet solid weapon of applied common sense." In 1923 Captain T. J. J. See, an astronomer in the employ of the United States Navy, cried: "The Einstein doctrine that the ether does not exist, and that gravity is not a force, but a property of space, can only be described as a crazy vagary, a disgrace to our age!" It did not matter that the notion of an "ether"—an impalpable medium pervading all space, which transmitted light, electricity, and gravitation, but whose own existence was absolutely incapable of measurement—is on the face of it as wildly improbable an idea as anything dreamed up by Einstein. The wild idea of yesterday becomes the entrenched dogma of today. For

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the scientist as for any other man, Einstein himself once observed, common sense can be defined as a deposit of prejudices laid down in the mind prior to the age of eighteen.

But Einstein, as a physicist, also believed that even the wildest mathematical idea must have some verifiable relationship, however shadowy, with the world of common sense. "For our purpose it is necessary to associate the fundamental concepts of geometry with natural objects," he told his Princeton hosts in 1921. One such natural object was the planet Mercury, whose eccentric orbit was predictable from Einstein's assumptions, but unaccountable from Newton's. Another was the image of a star whose emitted rays had passed near the sun en route to earth, photographed during a solar eclipse. According to Einstein, the light would be displaced from its normal apparent position in the sky, bent by the sun's mass. In September 1922, to check out this strange idea, Americans from the Lick Observatory in California tramped through prickly desert scrub near Wallal Downs, a telegraph station in far western Australia, to put up their tents and temporary observatory in preparation for a total eclipse of the sun. On September 21 the appointed moment of darkness came; behind the black circle of the moon the sun's corona or halo appeared, displaying one streamer 2,225,000 miles long; the flickering bonfires of the solar prominences sprang into view. Five photographic plates were exposed before the moon passed by. A similar British venture in 1919, netting only seven star images, had been judged inconclusive; but when the Americans developed their plates after the 1922 eclipse, they found they had bagged more than threescore stars. Measured by other astronomers who could not know the results beforehand, the pinpoint images averaged out to a mean displacement of 1.74 seconds of arc, almost exactly as the Einstein equations predicted.

Lick Observatory director W. W. Campbell, the expedition's leader, declared he was satisfied; the Lick Observatory would make no further efforts to verify Einstein. But that did not end the argument. Two months after those observations in Australia—and a few days after Einstein had been awarded the Nobel Prize—a special meeting of the Communist party of the Soviet Union condemned Einstein's theory as "the product of the bourgeois class in decomposition . . . reactionary of nature, furnishing support for counter-revolutionary ideas." Some Americans, bourgeois or otherwise, concurred in this condemnation, if not in its Marxist rationale.

The theory of relativity became a staple item in collegiate and other public debates during the twenties. "Is Einstein Wrong?" asked the editors of the *Forum* in one typical symposium in 1924. Yes, argued

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Charles Poor; those "transformations" by which Einstein proposed to account for the slight kink in Mercury's orbit are what we used to call "approximations," no more. No, replied Archibald Henderson, "there are no errors of Einstein." It was not necessary that the hypotheses upon which relativity rested be "in accord with 'common sense' so-called, but simply that they fit the facts—that the relativistic calculations accord with observation and experiment." But they don't, Professor Poor insisted; the alleged refractions of starlight measured by the Lick Observatory expedition could be accounted for by distortions in the sun's corona or the earth's atmosphere. Mystified by this disagreement, Professor Irving Fisher of Yale—whose own discipline was economics, in those precrash years a field hardly less arcane—concluded with resignation: "Astronomers and physicists must fight it out and the rest of us must wait."

Among the many who could not follow the mathematical pros and cons, some were not willing to wait. Far from resting contented with the conclusions of "common sense," imaginative listeners to such debates may have found in the strangeness of Einstein's theory precisely its appeal. "In place of gravitation, in place of the attraction of one body for another," wrote Professor Poor in what he intended as a rebuttal,

> Einstein substitutes a transcendental conception of warped space and of geodesic lines along which a body freely rolls. The sun does not attract the earth, it crumples up space, twists and warps space in some mystic fourth and even fifth dimension, and the earth, carried by its own inertia, wends its way along the easiest path amid the bumps and hollows of crushed and crumpled space. And in this four-dimensional space the ordinary laws of geometry do not apply.

None of this had much to do with stocks and bonds, or with any of the other supposed preoccupations of the twenties. And yet pragmatic America from time to time throughout its history has been hospitable to transcendental conceptions. The descendants of those who yielded to the "Divine and Supernatural Light" with Edwards, or who affirmed with Emerson "the identity of the law of gravitation with purity of heart," may have found in Einstein their guide to the new century's *mysterium tremendum*.

III

Albert Einstein was not the only bearer of strange new tidings about the universe. Max Planck's quantum theory, wrote Edwin Slosson in 1922, was "quite as important and even more disconcerting to ordinary

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ideas than the relativity theory, but the public has not yet heard so much about it—perhaps because Planck is not so picturesque as Einstein." True, the prestige of science in some quarters might be at an all-time high—too high, in the opinion of some. A disapproving *Nation* editorial in 1928 lamented that "A sentence which begins with 'Science says' will generally be found to settle any argument in a social gathering, or sell any article from tooth-paste to refrigerator." But in these higher reaches it was by no means clear *what* "science says." In the previous century, literary men had responded to what "science said" by writing Darwinist stories, poems, and essays; but (as Frederick Hoffman noted in his study *The Twenties*) despite a modish adoption of "relativity" as a catchword by the literary avant-garde, nobody attempted to write an "Einsteinian" novel. Both the opponents and the defenders of Darwin assumed, not always correctly, that they understood him. In contrast, as *Harper's* said in 1929 of the Einstein theory, "We see an extraordinarily animated public interest in an alleged discovery which hardly anyone understands."

But events like the Scopes "monkey trial" showed that even the more "commonsense" variety of scientific endeavor in the twenties was imperfectly reported, and still more imperfectly understood. "Science, of late, has been good news," H. L. Mencken remarked in 1927. The newspapers, he went on, "discuss it copiously, and with a fine enthusiasm. But . . . they seldom discuss it with any intelligence." Antidemocratic conclusions could be drawn from such a judgment, and the Sage of Baltimore often drew them. But it is noteworthy that Albert Einstein, remote though he seemed from the common man, never did. "It is of great importance that the general public be given an opportunity to experience—consciously and intelligently—the efforts and results of scientific research," the physicist would write in 1948, after the atomic bomb had made the importance of that effort more painfully obvious. But who was to give the public that opportunity? The scientist—again Einstein himself is an honorable exception—hardly qualified. "In the scientific world," Sir Richard Gregory told the British Association for the Advancement of Science in 1921, "the way to distinction is discovery, and not exposition, and rarely are the two faculties combined."

"How is scientific knowledge to be democratized?" the American historian James Harvey Robinson asked in a little book published in 1923, *The Humanizing of Knowledge:*

> Scholars and men of science almost always write more or less unconsciously for one another. This is a natural outcome of their training. They must prove their

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preparation to deal with the subject in hand. . . . The specter haunts them, not of a puzzled and frustrated reader, but of a tart reviewer, likely to accuse them of superficiality or inaccuracy. There is a heavy prejudice in learned circles against the popularizer.

As a result, Robinson argued, "Scientifically and philosophically trained writers apparently have no idea how hard their books and articles are for the general reader," and he proceeded to quote some horrible examples. Much of the difficulty was sheer pedantry, Robinson contended: "A considerable and beneficent revolution" could be wrought if only the college instructor and the textbook writer would "confine himself, at least in addressing beginners or laymen, to telling only such facts as play so important a part in his own everyday thinking that he could recall them without looking them up!" Robinson was also aware of the infectiousness of enthusiasm: "It is a good rule for a writer to assume that nothing in his favorite subject that fails to interest *him* vividly and persistently is likely to interest the outsider who reads his book."

This is not an instance of the humanistic scholar condemning the scientist as a cultural barbarian; we are not listening in on the feud between Sir Charles Snow's "Two Cultures." Quite the contrary; Robinson's polemic grew out of a session at the 1922 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. By that time, in part moved politically by the popular antiscience sentiment manifest in the statutes that outlawed the teaching of evolution, America's scientific establishment had taken steps to put its own house in more comprehensible order. In 1921 Science Service was founded in Washington, D. C., as a scientific news syndicate on the model of the Associated Press. A circular of instructions to writers of articles for Science Service made it clear that advice like Robinson's had fallen on receptive ears:

The first consideration . . . is to tell or interpret a scientific event. But the news stories must be so well written that large national newspapers will use them without rewriting or revision, either in form or language. Write your story so that those who know nothing about science will understand and want to read it. Weave in the scientific background that the man in the street does not have. Use simple words. Make your story as graphic as if you were talking about it.

Yet the writer must not achieve his simplification by distortion: " 'By Science Service' must stand for accuracy of content and implication." It was an exacting assignment the science news bureau set for its writers, and, in the case of news made by the likes of Einstein and Planck, a staggering one. But the first director of Science Service tackled his job

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with relish. Blond, broad-featured Edwin Emery Slosson, a native of Kansas, had long had a foot firmly planted in each of Snow's "Two Cultures." A Ph.D. *magna* from the University of Chicago in its exciting early days, he had taught chemistry at the universities of Kansas and Wyoming; but he had also served as literary editor for the *Independent,* an esteemed journal of general opinion, for which he wrote vigorous and provocative editorials between 1903 and 1921. He had conducted a course in physical science for journalists at Columbia University's School of Journalism, and in 1920 he had undertaken to write on the scarcely easy theme *Easy Lessons in Einstein.* "He was able to interest anyone," asserts the *Dictionary of American Biography,* "not only in the accomplishments of science, but in science itself, without offending the purest of the scientists." Tirelessly he poured out articles, lectures, and publicity until his death in Washington on October 15, 1929, just nine days before the great crash. Standard accounts of the twenties never mention him, but of all the host of journalist-intellectuals who committed their thoughts to print during that decade he may ultimately have been one of the most influential.

Science Service evidently met a felt need: fifty newspapers in the United States and several in Canada promptly subscribed. By 1927 the agency had also ventured into radio broadcasting, with a "Science News of the Week" program carried over seventeen stations. At the end of that year the annual meeting of the AAAS held a symposium on "Science and the Newspapers." Such a session would not have been possible twenty years earlier, said David Dietz, science editor of the Scripps-Howard chain. The scientists would not have considered the subject dignified or proper or even ethical, and the newspapermen would have been uninterested. "Those were the days when science was synonymous with ten-syllable inunderstandable words, to be treated appropriately by the staff humorist and the cartoonist." H. L. Mencken's gibes, accordingly, had become out of date and unjustified. Indeed, two researchers studying "biology in the public press" concluded from their statistical analysis of 4,000 articles (some 26,000 column-inches) in fourteen prominent dailies that "newspapers appear to be more up-to-date in things biological than are college and high-school texts in the subject." They recommended, therefore, that teachers make use of newspaper articles in preference to those ponderously assembled textbooks whose ink was hardly dry before they were obsolete.

Books as well as newspapers carried the popular scientific message. By 1927 an *Outline of Science* had sold 100,000 copies; George A. Dorsey's *Why We Behave Like Human Beings* had been a best seller for three years;

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and the titles in a Library of Modern Sciences—such as *Stories in Stone, Animals of Land and Sea, The Earth and the Stars*—were reportedly doing well. And the next generation's attention was being engaged; thousands of children were writing entries for a national prize essay contest in chemistry. The commercial potential here was great, and so was the temptation to pad sales by sensational or overly simple writing at the expense of accuracy. One book publisher's secretary-treasurer, Robert S. Gill of Williams & Wilkins, warned against the latter tendency: "If the gospel is really to be spread, it must have a multitude of patrons, not a multitude of the patronized."

IV

But how was the gospel to be spread to the kind of busy citizens who felt, in those booming twenties, that they literally could not afford to take time out to read anything in the newspaper beyond the financial page, let alone a whole book? Harrison E. Howe, editor of *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry*, told the AAAS's symposium on science and the press that it was futile to begin with fundamental research if one were to arouse interest among such Americans. "The businessman, indeed the professional man, prefers to have you begin with something with which he is familiar—the milk bottle, a cake of soap, a mirror, his automobile." But was this assertion really true? To take so prosy an approach was to overlook the perennial lure of whatever is different and far off—a lure to which educators were (and are) largely immune. But Edwin Slosson told the American Association for Adult Education in 1928 "that archeology and astronomy—essentially remote and unpractical—head the list of the sciences in order of popular interest, and that the essentially practical sciences are low on the list." Slosson ascribed this preference "to the same cause as that operating in the selection of, say, 'futuristic art' as a subject of study in a women's club rather than 'domestic economy.' " Well might a liberated woman who had had quite enough of domestic economy, thank you, have cried "Right on!" And perhaps her spouse also might crave more from science than counsel for managing his investments.

To insist relentlessly upon the practical was also to overlook one of science's appeals to its own practitioners. The man in the street conceivably might admire the scientist's self-sacrificing dedication or appreciate the contributions of science to human welfare; he rarely suspected that the scientist was also enjoying himself. "Enthusiasm and fun charge the atmosphere at Leiden, Cambridge, Cornell, and Johns Hopkins," wrote

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one contributor to the AAAS's austere *Scientific Monthly* in 1928. The scientist might express his own enthusiasm and joy "on a Saturday afternoon working in a laboratory, perhaps malodorous and dark," while others were displaying theirs "standing in the rain and getting sore throats yelling 'Block that kick!' " But if the latter saw "no fun in looking through a microscope or scrutinizing test tubes or listening to radio signals coming from half way round the world, nothing is proved. It all depends on what kind of fun one likes best." If the problem was one of "humanizing" the scientist for the layman, this might have been one of the most effective solutions; the twenties, an era of Babbitt busyness, were also a time of energetic hedonism.

Moreover, to dwell upon the milk bottle, the cake of soap, the mirror, the automobile, was to leave the job of science education half-done. It was, in effect, to substitute technology for science. "The scientists have gone off all by themselves and made a magic that even they didn't foresee," wrote Robert L. Duffus in *Collier*'s for January 12, 1924. ". . . This magic is transportation and great cities and wars and Ford factories and much else. . . . [But] these are the mere by-products of science, the symbol and prophecy of its coming power for good or evil." The common man had taken these gifts of science but otherwise gone on in his accustomed unscientific way, "thinking with his spinal column, his liver, his adrenal glands—with anything but his brain." And the common man, in his capacity as a citizen, could not afford thus to let others do all the thinking about science for him. "Science, represented not by a few specialists in laboratories, but by all of us, must make possible a planned civilization. The present one is haphazard rather than planned, and—well, take a good look at it yourself."

George Horace Lorimer, the doggedly reactionary editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*, who later became an ardent foe of the New Deal, would have bristled at the idea of a "planned civilization." But he shared in this worry that basic, theoretical science was being hustled offstage by its more glamorous sibling. "The Science sisters, Pure and Applied, are a strange pair," Lorimer wrote in a 1926 *Post* editorial:

> Applied is the starry-eyed goddess, the wonder worker, who gets on the first page of newspapers and captivates the imagination of men. She speaks the language of the people, gives them what they want, and every year perfects new gifts to make life easier or longer or more amusing. . . . She is her own press agent and the sun never sets on the advertising she gets. . . .
>
> Pure Science is the wallflower, the elder sister who lives secluded and remote, unknown and unpraised. She does not advertise her astounding feats, and could not if she would, for the only language she knows is a jumble of Latin,

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Greek, calculus, and mathematical formulas. Only a few professors can understand what she is driving at.

The past thirty years, for basic theoretical science, had been the most fruitful in the world's history. In due course, the *Post* editor predicted, technology would harvest those findings and get the credit, while Pure Science continued to starve in her usual obscurity.

Charles E. Wilson, president of General Motors in the late forties and afterward Dwight Eisenhower's secretary of defense, once said he opposed spending good hard money on basic research, explaining that he didn't care what made potatoes turn brown when they were fried. Some of his Establishment forebears in the twenties, on this point at least, seem to have been more enlightened. In the belief that "the funds now available for the support of research in pure science in the United States are far below what our population, education and material resources demand," leaders in science, business, and politics created a National Research Endowment to support fundamental scientific investigation. Among them were A. A. Michelson, the measurer of the speed of light; Robert Millikan, the first American physicist to have won a Nobel Prize; George Ellery Hale, director of the mighty Mount Wilson Observatory; John J. Carty, vice-president of American Telephone & Telegraph; Owen D. Young, board chairman of General Electric; Treasury Secretary and financial entrepreneur Andrew Mellon; former presidential candidates Charles Evans Hughes and John W. Davis; and elder statesmen Elihu Root and Colonel E. M. House.

"It is true that money cannot buy genius, but many a genius in science has defaulted because he has had to eat," declared Herbert Hoover, who logically and inevitably became chairman of the National Research Endowment's board. America did not lack competent scientific researchers, he affirmed, but "with the comfort of their families at heart, such men reluctantly accept well-paid industrial positions instead of poorly paid academic posts." National Research Endowment support would, he hoped, give able investigators the "comfort in life, freedom of action and opportunity for constructive thought that industrial and administrative officers in this country, certainly of no larger calibre, habitually enjoy."

The profit angle was of course present: the pure science of today nourishes the technology of tomorrow, which produces the dividends of the day after. Even the rarefied field of astrophysics, AT&T's John J. Carty testified, had "useful" applications. Still, it is interesting that Hoover—so often typecast as the "Great Engineer," with an engineer's

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limited intellectual and social vision—should have considered "the discovery of a law of nature" to be "a far greater advance" than a study in an industrial laboratory leading to the improvement of some process or machine. "We must add to knowledge," Hoover concluded, "both for the intellectual and spiritual satisfaction that comes from widening the range of human understanding, and for the direct practical utilization of these fundamental discoveries." "The pure scientists," Carty cried, "are the advance guard of civilization."

V

"A new idea comes first in the mind of one man. That means that the new idea starts out in the world with a majority of 1,600,000,000 against it," wrote Edwin Slosson in 1926. "This instinctive mass reaction against new ideas . . . is essentially the same as the common aversion to a foreigner: ' 'E's a stranger. 'Eave 'arf a brick at 'im.' " Although the director of Science Service was careful to point out that scientists themselves were no more immune to this tendency to "neophobia" than other kinds of men, to some extent such an argument nonetheless smacks of elitism. In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king, and at least the scientist has the one eye. "Newton's law would never have passed if it depended upon a popular vote," and even today, Slosson believed, in a plebiscite of the entire planet "the Copernican theory would be repealed by an immense majority." Copernican and Newtonian, not to mention Einsteinian, theories are not something the masses will discover if left to themselves.

With this leader-follower point of view pervading the writings of the science publicists, it is small wonder that in some quarters their outpourings were taken not as enlightening instruction but as arrogant propaganda. This backlash was especially apparent in the evolution controversy, as the transcript of the Darrow-Bryan clash at Dayton, Tennessee, in 1925 made painfully clear:

> Mr. Bryan: Your Honor, it isn't proper to bring experts in here to try to defeat the purpose of the people of this state. . . .
>
> Mr. Darrow: You insult every man of science and learning in the world because he does not believe in your fool religion!

It should be remembered that the trial judge made both men apologize.

Despite the attempts at a cease-fire between science and religion that were current in the twenties, the need to combat what they considered "fool religion" was implicit in many of the science publicists'

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writings. At that 1927 AAAS symposium on "Science and the Newspapers," for example, William E. Ritter spoke of "the necessity of displacing the legendary, mythical and merely authoritarian knowledge which has constituted [man's] theology by his verified and verifiable experiential knowledge of himself and the world." But perhaps all that this showed was that the science educator himself was as much in need of updating his world view as were those whom he hoped to educate. Terms like *verified* and *verifiable* had become a good deal more slippery than they had seemed to Thomas Huxley, and some (but by no means all) scientists who breathed the new relativistic atmosphere were deciding that science was after all reconcilable with theism. In a sense, science was suffering through a generation gap. In 1928 James Truslow Adams argued that the scientific assumption of a previous generation—namely, mechanistic materialism—had hardened into a present popular dogma whose blind advocates were as bigoted as anybody living in Dayton, Tennessee: "Were the citizens of our cities and graduates of our high schools really so much more intelligent than the shirt-sleeve mountaineers? Do they really know so much more about the universe?"

There were politically troublesome questions raised by the new explainers of science also. When a writer for Science Service's *Science News Letter* in 1927 described the mulattoes of North America as combining "something of a white man's intelligence and ambition with an insufficient intelligence to realize that ambition," such a statement could be taken merely as a reflection of the incompleteness of scientific knowledge itself; in the twenties, scientists' opinions on race were very much in a state of flux. But specific changes in scientific knowledge could not abate a certain conservative, even antipolitical streak that ran through the popularizers' writings, Edwin Slosson's in particular. "It is an old saying in political history that 'revolutions never go backward,' " Slosson wrote in 1922 to introduce a series of articles for the news monthly *World's Work* on "Science Remaking the World." "Perhaps they never do, but sometimes it seems that they don't go forward either. . . . The political revolution is too much like the automobile motor when the gear is disengaged. It makes a lot of noise and some explosions and throws out a lot of hot air, but it does not move the car of progress." What, then, did move that car? Slosson's answer was explicit: "The extension of democracy which the politician promises is being widely accomplished by the scientist who, by placing the exclusive luxuries of former ages within the lives of all, raises the humblest to a higher plane. The democracy of science is a leveling-up process while the democracy of the communist is a leveling-down process."

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Warren Harding himself might have said "Amen." This was the same social conservatism that had been argued years earlier by William Graham Sumner, the laissez-faire champion, in his essay, "The Absurd Effort to Make the World Over." Later in that series on "Science Remaking the World," Slosson illustrated his point in a way that cried down not only revolution but even ordinary political persuasion. When Roentgen discovered the X ray, according to Slosson, he had not had to found an "International Society for the Conversion of the World to the Idea of the X-Rays":

> He did not have to raise an endowment fund and hire a salaried staff, organize a corps of local organizers, and publish a weekly organ. No, he simply announced his discovery in a modest paper that you can read in ten minutes . . . but in a few months every laboratory in the world was taking X-ray photographs. Yet the X-ray has really accomplished more in the world than many a reform movement that makes a great noise and requires tremendous effort.

Slosson did concede in this article that "science provides the motive power, but not the motive for the use of power." Yet that is a most important hedge; to motivate that use, noise and effort and conceivably even revolution—and organization for those purposes—might after all have a place in the scientific scheme of things.

Edwin Slosson might have done better if he had taken a hint from one of the men he so successfully popularized. Albert Einstein's civic passions—Zionism, pacifism, socialism, world government—were as much a part of the man as the equations with which he attempted to unlock the riddle of the universe. Nor were they something he merely indulged in as a private or nonscientific person after he had closed the door of his laboratory. Many Americans know by now that Albert Einstein in 1939 wrote a letter to Franklin Roosevelt, as a result of which that obscure formula $e = mc^2$ was translated into the most terrifying kind of everyday reality. Not so many are aware that he was afterward instrumental in founding the Federation of Atomic Scientists, a group of men who responsibly labored in the arena of public and political persuasion for the purpose of bringing the jinn they had let out of the bottle back under control.

At the 1927 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, the Bishop of Ripon suggested that the scientists take a ten-year holiday during which their laboratories would all be closed "and the patient and resourceful energy displayed in them transferred to recovering the lost art of getting together." "Science has been leading us rather a giddy chase for the last two or three decades," said the *Chicago*

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Evening Post, and as a result the good bishop's feeling was shared by multitudes. But such a proposal was quixotic. "It is not possible to call a halt," Sir Oliver Lodge replied. "If we stopt, the world would go to pieces." To hold the pieces in place it would indeed be necessary to recover—or *dis*cover—the art of getting together, but closing the laboratory doors was not the way to achieve it. One of the ways people had to get together was precisely in their respective capacities as scientist and citizen.

Fifty years later both the bishop's proposal and the physicist's reply have their ardent partisans; neither politically nor intellectually have we worked our way out of this problem. To contend that science should remake the world without check or interference from the politicians (or the people) may have been irresponsible, a surrender on Slosson's part to the self-satisfied complacency that was also part of the spirit of the twenties. But to have anticipated Snow's "Two Cultures" argument, and interpreted it to mean that the layman must abandon *any* attempt to understand and socially apply the insights of science because the scientist and the nonscientist cannot speak to each other at all, would have been more irresponsible still.

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Tovey's Beethoven

JOSEPH KERMAN

The title of this essay does not refer to Donald F. Tovey's *Beethoven,* the 136-page fragment published posthumously in 1945, but more generally to Tovey's view of the composer who stood at the center of his musical experience. Tovey must still be the most widely read music critic in English-speaking countries. His work has been attacked; it has also been bypassed and tacitly contradicted; but it has never lost its broad appeal. In respect to Beethoven and the other classical composers, in fact, it is not too much to say that Tovey's writings remained unmatched until the appearance of *The Classical Style* by Charles Rosen in 1971. And this book—the most striking book on music we have seen in a long while—owes much to Tovey, who is the one writer on music mentioned in it at all frequently. Subjected to a modern critique, certain of Tovey's insights and attitudes assume new life in *The Classical Style*—which is a signal tribute to their continuing vitality.

Tovey was born a hundred years ago, in 1875. To understand the continuing vitality of his work, and to come to terms with Tovey's Beethoven, this work should be seen as a whole, both as critical theory and as critical practice, and it should be seen in its historical perspective.

II

When Donald Francis Tovey's career as a pianist, composer, and writer on music was launched in London in 1900, he was at once identified as a conservative figure. "His total misapprehension of what is called the modern spirit in music is simply astonishing," snapped the critic of the *Manchester Guardian* in 1903. From his childhood on, Tovey came under the spell of two remarkable musicians, both adherents of the musical conservative party, Brahmsians rather than Wagnerians. He never wavered in his allegiance to their ideals.

One of them was Sophie Weisse, who took the five-year-old Eton Latin master's son into her "Dames' School" and insisted on making him into a musician. Twenty years later she launched her protégé in London, and she continued to control his affairs until he escaped to the Reid Professorship at Edinburgh in 1914. It is a sobering thought that if it had not been for this immeasurably strong-willed German woman, Tovey would have gone to Eton and, most probably, followed some non-musical calling. The other great influence was Joseph Joachim, a commanding figure in both German and English musical life of the time. Tovey likened his relationship with the older man to that of Tamino and Sarastro. Through Joachim he acquired a vicarious link with the great German tradition by way of Mendelssohn, under whom Joachim had made his memorable English debut in 1844 playing the Beethoven Violin Concerto, and especially by way of Joachim's great friend, Brahms. Whatever complimentary words Tovey ever found to say about Wagner, in his bones he felt that the great tradition ended with Brahms. He could have been under no illusions that his own classicizing musical compositions—mostly written between 1900

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and 1915—carried forward the great tradition in any relevant way. And he heard no fresh music after 1900 that flowed in his famous "main stream."

Tovey's incomparable *Encyclopaedia Britannica* articles of 1906–10 read like a defense of the old order, and for his inaugural lecture at Edinburgh he lectured on—the classics. His biographer, Mary Grierson, says that a grand opus on musical aesthetics, which he projected as an undergraduate at Oxford and worked on from 1898 to 1900, contained the seed of all his later writing. It is not clear whether she had actual evidence for this contention or whether she was putting two and two together, but the idea certainly feels right. Some of his *Essays in Musical Analysis* go back to 1902 and the much-admired—though not by the *Manchester Guardian*—study of "The Classical Concerto" appeared in 1903. These early efforts do not differ appreciably from his latest work in their content or quality of mind. Beyond the very earliest ones (the essays from 1900 and 1901 are republished in the volume *Chamber Music*), they do not differ appreciably in style or tone either.

In dealing with Tovey, then, we are dealing with a mind that was entirely formed—that was made up—in the nineteenth century. Simply in terms of modernity of thought, it is very striking to compare Tovey with some of his German contemporaries, men of no less genius who were committed no less firmly to the classical tradition culminating in Brahms: men such as Schenker, Schnabel, and of course Schoenberg. That Tovey's work has been attacked, bypassed, and contradicted is therefore scarcely surprising. What is more surprising—what is, on the face of it, nothing short of astonishing—is the contemporary vigor of a body of criticism so thoroughly grounded in Victorian ideas, tastes, attitudes, and inhibitions.

The systematic book on musical aesthetics was never written. However, at the end of his career Tovey endeavored repeatedly, if not systematically, to put his basic ideas on music in order—starting with the Deneke Lecture at Lady Margaret Hall in 1934 ("I regurgitate here certain platitudes which, with no pretence of originality, I was already maintaining in the year of the Diamond Jubilee") and continuing with the Romanes Lecture at Oxford, the Annual Lecture on Aspects of Art at the British Academy, the Cramb Lectures at Glasgow, and the Alsop Lectures at Liverpool.

In one form or another these lectures were all published, and then republished, but it cannot be said that they constitute the most fortunate segment of Tovey's corpus of writings. His genius did not extend to the logical conduct of an argument, any more than it contained the capacity for genuine development or change. Reading Tovey's lectures, indeed, with their bright dogmatic assertions, their non sequiturs, paradoxes, and elusive digressions, one cannot escape the impression that all is not quite as it seems, that on some level he was engaged in an involved process of papering over the cracks. We should not come to these lectures hoping to grasp the coherent aesthetic philosophy that Tovey never did succeed in formulating. Nevertheless, certain elements of this philosophy penetrate deeply into his criticism. The lectures do expose the issues that concerned him most centrally, issues that we shall find were not always fully resolved in his work.

A primary belief of Tovey's was that everything of aesthetic importance in music lies within the province of his famous "naïve listener." This personage has no specific musical training, only a willing ear and a ready sensibility. Tovey maintained he could teach anyone to appreciate the aesthetic qualities of double counterpoint at the twelfth; and although he reports that he once agonized over whether he could do the same for the refinements of classical tonality, the doubts were eventually dispelled to his satisfaction. Did Tovey really mean all this literally, or was the naïve listener an abstraction against which to test a typically Victorian conviction that art (like knowledge) must be democratically available to all? In any case, and despite its array of technicalities, Tovey's criticism is essentially nonprofessional in orientation—even populist, one might say, if not for the suspicion that the naïve listener has at least a pass degree from Oxford University. Now, Tovey himself had an extraordinary ear and could certainly apprehend things in music beyond the range of many professional listeners, let alone nonprofessionals. There can be little doubt that the populist critical dogma caused him to minimize parts of his musical expe-

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rience, and that this led to some of the cracks in his aesthetic system.

Many of Tovey's other ideas can be seen to cluster around another central dogma. That artistic form and content are equivalent is not an unusual concept; what is unusual is the tenacity with which Tovey held it and the way it saturated his thought. "Material and form are true functions of one another": this and other such formulations no doubt owe something to the Oxford neo-Hegelians, among them Edward Caird, who was master of Balliol College when Tovey was studying the traditional curriculum of classics and philosophy there. (Grierson found out that he wrote a brilliant philosophy paper in his final examination; his third-class degree was a result of failing classics.) One fundamental corollary of the form-content equation is the idea that absolute music represents the art in its ideal state. For when Tovey discovered "perfection of form" in fugues and sonatas, which he did frequently, he conceived that he had also discovered perfection of content—in sum, artistic perfection. From here it was only one step to his well-known pantheon of masterpieces of instrumental music.

However, some accommodation had to be made in this formalist position for music associated with nonmusical ideas—the central preoccupation of nineteenth-century musical aesthetics. Tovey believed that absolute music could nonetheless digest all kinds of other "contents" (an insight that he always attributed to A. C. Bradley's inaugural lecture as Professor of Poetry in 1901, "Poetry for Poetry's Sake"). Music with words and program music are not lower forms of art than absolute music, for the words and the programs are absorbed into the absolute music, and this maintains its own perfection according to its own formal principles. Tovey was also persuaded that every work of art takes its own unique form from its own material or musical content, however "strict" (and therefore seemingly predetermined) that form might appear on a superficial view. Much energy was spent on a recurring polemic against the "jelly-mold" theory of musical form. In a difficult passage, which grew no less difficult as he repeated it again and again in variation, Tovey discussed the F-sharp minor setting of "Aus tiefer Noth" in the *Clavierübung,* part 3—of all Bach's compositions perhaps the strictest in form. Did the "consummate rhetoric" of this piece stem from the strict form, or did the strict form follow from the rhetoric? Tovey could see it just as well either way, and this assured him of the equivalence of artistic form and content.

In his Deneke Lecture he wrote:

> The line between the technical and the aesthetic is by no means easy to draw, and is often, even by musicians themselves, drawn far too high, so as to exclude as merely technicalities many things which are of purely aesthetic importance. . . . The process miscalled by Horace the concealment of art is the sublimation of technique into aesthetic results.

Indeed this line is by no means easy to draw, and Tovey's greatest achievement came in drawing it so cleanly so many times, and in drawing it so low. "The sublimation of technique into aesthetic results" amounts to another formulation of the identity of form and content, of course, and this formulation makes a convenient framework within which to view Tovey's actual criticism.

III

What sorts of statements and judgments does Tovey actually make about music? As an example let us consider a short passage where he is making a limited point, such as his discussion of the transition passage preparing for the finale of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (*Beethoven,* pages 16-17). The preparation, Tovey says, is manifestly for something new, not for some sort of return of older material. This, perhaps, is an indication of the primary aesthetic effect of the passage, and he goes on to say how it is compounded of secondary aesthetic effects. The scherzo seems "finished, exhausted, played out"—because a main section that is "dark, mysterious, and, in part, fierce" has "suddenly collapsed," after which a trio "dies away" and the return of the scherzo is "one of the ghostliest things ever written." Next, in the one sentence of the whole excerpt that a well-disposed reader might hold up as an example of real musical analysis, Tovey describes the actual transition:

> The drum, as you will see, is upon the tonic

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note, but the bass hovers uneasily to and fro beneath it; and, finally, we have the paradox of the tonic in the drums, quasi-dominant harmonies above it, and the dominant below it, until only at the imminent approach of the crash the top-heavy harmony straightens itself out into a dominant seventh.

Yet how, the less well-disposed reader might ask, does this technical account actually relate to the aesthetic "miracle"?

Implicit in Tovey's method, I believe, if not in his theory, is the admission that we cannot plumb the mystery of his "sublimation" process. There is a genius in the machine, and Tovey makes no attempt to exorcise it. That is the mission of our modern "background" analysts and musical semioticists. What he does, in his most impressive passages, is describe the technical means and the aesthetic effect and invite the reader to contemplate, if not their logical or necessary connection, at all events their simultaneity and likely association. ("I have often been grateful to a dull description that faithfully guides me to the places where great artistic experiences await me," Tovey writes.) Elsewhere there is a generous measure of elision in his method. He does not spell out in detail the technical correlatives of the collapse and the dying out (matters of rhythm and dynamics) or of the ghostliness (a matter of orchestration, articulation, dynamics, and compression of form).

As for that difficult matter, aesthetic quality—it seems to have caused Tovey little difficulty. He was always ready with affective adjectives, analogies, allusions, and similes from a broad range of life and literature. Musical aesthetics, as Tovey and his naïve listener experienced them, share a common world with our sense of darkness, exhaustion, uneasiness, and crash. The ghostliness of the Fifth Symphony scherzo *da capo* has "something of the thin, bickering quality of the poor ghosts that Homer describes where Odysseus visits the Land of Shadows." It is customary to say that language of this kind applied to aesthetic discourse is being used metaphorically, but Tovey's use has a very literal ring. Such language, logical positivists have reminded us, is incorrigible, and Tovey himself warns against impressionistic criticism:

> . . . we shall do well to beware of the exclusively subjective methods of criticism so much in vogue since the latter part of the nineteenth century; methods which may be but mildly caricatured as consisting in sitting in front of a work of art, feeling our pulses, and noting our symptoms before we have taken the slightest trouble to find out whether, as a matter of fact, the language of that art means what we think it means.

For Tovey, of course, the operative qualification was expressed in the concluding "before" clause. Having taken no slight trouble, and having learned the language perfectly, and having written about it at length, he seems to have felt entirely at liberty to record his incorrigible symptoms.

It may all be based on a ghastly philosophical fallacy. But it is worth seeing how this view of musical aesthetics goes hand in hand with Tovey's conviction that all music—or at least, all that counts in music—is the property of the naïve listener. As there is a continuity between musical experience and the experience of ordinary life, the naïve listener can move easily into the world of music without abandoning his extramusical sensibilities. They provide him, in fact, with his only sure guide to the new terrain. Tovey's populist aesthetics may also go some way to explain his repeated claim in the late lectures that music can absorb all kinds of contents. He was saying that absolute music could absorb a text or a program and still maintain its perfection, but what he was saying under his breath, I think, was that musical aesthetics could absorb the feelings of ordinary life. To the extent that this is the way that the art of literature has traditionally been regarded, Tovey's musical aesthetics can of course be seen to take its model from literature. Which is hardly surprising, for if one part of his mind was formed by Brahms and Joachim, another part of it was formed by Balliol.

Under his breath: for he was always prepared to say out loud that music makes its own effects and that these cannot be paralleled in life and literature. Yet what are we to make of this characteristic passage, in which he discusses the return of the scherzo theme within the Fifth Symphony finale?

> The nearest approach to its effect in history is, I venture to think, Kipling's action in publishing his *Recessional* the day after the Diamond Jubilee, though I am far from implying that Beethoven's intention in any piece of music can

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be more than dimly illustrated by anything either in history or literature; but the motto "Lest we forget" is an admirable summary of the effect which Beethoven produces when, at the end of his development, he is preparing quite formally on the dominant for a return to his main theme.

If this is "far from implying," it is hard to know what frank implication would look like.

There is certainly a problem today with Tovey's easy equating of aesthetic and nonaesthetic values and qualities. There is also a problem with his technical analyses, as exemplified in a small way by the sentence cited above describing the Fifth Symphony transition passage. Since Tovey's basic plank as a critic was that aesthetic results are sublimated from technique, discussions of technique (that is, analysis) figured prominently in his program notes from the very start. This astonished the London concert audience of the 1900s—the forty-seven-page essay on the *Goldberg* Variations must have come as a special shock—and alienated one segment of it. Perhaps today's concert audiences would react similarly. More professional readers, however, are likely to be alienated in another way, for by comparison with the full-dress analyses published by writers as diverse as Schenker, Lorenz, Edwin Evans, Sr., Hans Keller, and Allen Forte, Tovey's analyses can seem skimpy and superficial.

On the matter of skimpiness, first of all, it is no doubt unfortunate that Tovey entitled his most famous series of books *Essays in Musical Analysis*. Many of the program notes anthologized in these seven volumes can fairly be called analytical program notes in that they make some analytical points, often with great insight; but they do not carry analysis forward with any kind of rigor. (An exception is the "Précis of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony" in volume 1.) Tovey did in fact prepare more rigorous analyses, but these he directed to a different readership, to music students. His *Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas,* subtitled "Bar-to-bar Analysis," was issued by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music along with Tovey's handsome annotated edition of the sonatas.

In the introduction to the *Companion* Tovey put first things first:

> The first condition for a correct analysis of any piece of music is that the composition must be regarded as a process in time. There is no such thing as a simultaneous musical *coup d'oeil;* not even though Mozart is believed to have said that he imagined his music in that way. Some students begin their analysis of a sonata by glancing through it to see "where the Second Subject comes" and where other less unfortunately named sections begin. This is evidently not the way to read a story. . . .

That music exists as a continuous flux of time may seem like a venerable truism, but Tovey's devotion to it, or restriction to it, makes his work as an analyst distinctive. He listened to music the way one reads a story or follows a drama, not the way one reads a map or reflects upon a lyric; one can never forget the particularity of time when reading Tovey, as one notoriously can with the work of some other analysts. Although he discussed tonality more persuasively than other elements of music, tonality for him was not something primary, but only one of several important means by which composers control the larger rhythm. Tovey can be described as a "foreground" analyst par excellence, an analyst of the rhythmic surface of music. On a detailed level, his best analytical insights in the *Companion* and elsewhere concern temporal processes such as pharaseology, expectation and arrival, pacing, modulation, and—within limits—Schenker's "prolongation."

It is indeed the old-fashioned, no-nonsense view of music. Tovey himself remarked that his *Companion* analyses can serve "as an example of Sir Hubert Parry's method of musical précis-writing"—an exasperatingly Tory statement—but it is not so much Parry whose presence is felt in the *Companion* as Tovey's own naïve listener. Victorian scruples prevented him from admitting a gap between amateurs and professionals; even when writing for the latter, or at least for students, as in the *Companion,* he always assumed that they experienced music on its rhythmic surface. For that is where he considered that its aesthetic effects are made, effects that are democratically available to all, irrespective of professional training, and that he assumed to be the central interest of all listeners, whether amateur or professional.

Modern musical analysis typically appeals to some sort of background or background level, as in Schenker, and is almost always directed to a strictly professional readership.

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Little sympathy is expressed for the surface view of music (or for the naïve listener) in Hans Keller's sustained attack on Tovey, which takes as its text the article on "The Classical Concerto," with its partial analysis of Mozart's Piano Concerto in C, K. 503:

> Faultless descriptions are Tovey's specialty: his "analyses" are misnomers, even though there are occasional flashes of profound analytical insight. Otherwise, there is much eminently professional tautology. I have no doubt that Tovey was a great musician. His writings are a symptom of a social tragedy, for they are both a function of the stupidity of his audiences, the musical *nouveaux riches,* and too much of a mere reaction against the unmusicality of his academic forbears. . . . "The pianoforte enters," reports Tovey, "at first with scattered phrases. These quickly settle into a stream of florid melody. . . ." But why are they scattered? How are they scattered? Why are they scattered in the way they are scattered? What, in short, is the compositorial cause of these absolutely unprecedented, utterly "new" triplets?

Tovey did not look for "compositorial causes" in this sense. What concerned him was causality on another level, as we have seen: how does the music cause aesthetic effects? Rather than looking backward from the music he described to compositorial causes—a matter of primary interest to composers and other professionals, presumably—Tovey looked forward from the music to its aesthetic effect.

Neither causality, it may be remarked, can be demonstrated very well to unbelievers. With Tovey, for all the illuminating things he has to say about the technical makeup of music and about its effect, one has to take "the sublimation of technique into aesthetic results" pretty much on faith. Nevertheless this is at the heart of his effort and the key to the individuality of his writing. Certainly his analysis is superficial in the literal sense that he deals with the foreground of music—and deals with it very well. But even if he had delved into backgrounds too, that would not be the essential point. To object that he was insufficiently sensitive to thematic relationships, to phraseology on larger levels, to the force of register and tone color is also beside the main point. It is the constant link with musical effect that distinguishes Tovey's analytical method, not the details of the analysis itself.

IV

It is as certain as anything in the history of art that there will never be a time when Beethoven's work does not occupy the central place in a sound musical mind.

Thus Tovey concluded his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on Beethoven. He was writing accurately enough about the central place occupied by Beethoven in his own mind. Besides articles, lectures, and program notes, he undertook two larger works of criticism and analysis, and they are indeed both on Beethoven: the *Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas* and the posthumously published book on the composer. One of his most important articles, which we shall examine in a moment, concerns Beethoven, who also received the lion's share—nearly 250 pages—of the *Essays in Musical Analysis.*

This will not come as any surprise, for Tovey made up his mind about music at the very height of Beethoven's prestige, at a time when the composer occupied a central place in many or most people's musical universe. Joachim was the first honorary president of the Beethoven-Verein at Bonn. Mahler conducted a massed choir of Viennese workers and a brass band in the "Ode to Joy" to inaugurate the grandiose Beethoven shrine of Klimt and Klinger. Romain Rolland wrote *Jean-Christophe.* And Schenker, too, published his most exhaustive studies on works by Beethoven: the Third, Fifth, and Ninth Symphonies and the late piano sonatas.

Yet Schenker's work—or at least his essential contribution—is imaginable without Beethoven, in a way that Tovey's is not. One has the impression that Tovey's whole aesthetic grew out of his experience of Beethoven (which may even have been true in a very simple sense: the most vivid childhood impression that he relates was his first hearing of the Violin Concerto). Looking at the matter from the other side, it stands to reason that a critical method that concentrates on the articulation of time will work best with music whose large-scale rhythmic effects are emphatic and varied. Tovey explained cogently, on more than one occasion, the distinction between the "dramatic" style of sonata and symphony and the "architectural" style of concerto grosso and fugue. His own activity as a performer was centered on music

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in the sonata style, and his best critical energy was devoted to the composer whose music moves the most dramatically of all.

To Tovey, furthermore—and I think many naïve listeners follow him here—Beethoven's music more than any other suggested links with life experience. Darkness, mystery, fierceness, ghostliness: Beethoven puts words like these into the critic's mouth in a way that Bach and even Haydn and Brahms do not. Beethoven also suggests psychological states of mind. It is striking that at the beginning of the Beethoven book, when Tovey announces that he will avoid "vulgar entanglements between the art and the artist's private or public life," he also goes out of his way to commend the influential little book by J. W. N. Sullivan, *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development,* first published in 1927. Sullivan explicitly traced Beethoven's music to his psyche. He was writing in reaction to the "pure music" view that was to reach its most distinguished formulation in the study by Walter Riezler, though also in reaction to the romantic sentimentality of such writers as Bekker. With infinite caution, Sullivan traced in one work after another the expressions of Beethoven's developing response to experience. It was this that must have impressed Tovey, though his own estimation of the composer's heroic inner life was expressed in rather different terms. We should not, I think, judge that this was a light matter for Tovey simply because he talked about it only sporadically: Beethoven was a great penitent, he had made up his mind about his responsibilities, and his duty was to preach and to edify. One gets an idea of what Tovey meant by the "soundness" of Beethoven, or of those musical minds in which Beethoven occupies a central place.

Significantly, perhaps, Sullivan distinguished between several kinds of music: music that "exists in isolation" and appeals only to our strictly musical perceptions, music that communicates spiritual states of mind, and music with an actual program. He offered no examples of music in his first category; Beethoven, of course, was his paradigm for the second. I have often wondered whether Tovey accepted this distinction as equivalent to his own distinction between "architectural" and "dramatic" styles of music. Though he wrote luminously and copiously about Bach, what he was able to say about him was of a different order than his discourse on Beethoven and the other composers in the sonata style. In reference to Bach, Tovey's musicological insights are sharpest and most frequent, but the impression he gives of the actual flux of time and of aesthetic particularity is much less specific. A statement such as the following, referring to the *Clavierübung* chorale preludes, would never have been made in reference to music by Beethoven: "I do not advise the listener to expect more from the music than what would engage my own attention—that is, a flow of noble fugue texture dominated by the chorale tune. . . ." Tovey always insisted that fugue was a texture, not a form. But he likened the aesthetics of the sonata fugue to that of the play-within-a-play, such as "The Murder of Gonzago" in *Hamlet.* Plays have form—dramatic form.

It is interesting, incidentally, to see the term "dramatic"—hardly a favorite of the Victorians—emerge as a criterion in Tovey. One does not get the impression that he was much of a theatergoer; most of his ideas about drama appear to have been derived from reading Shakespeare and the Greek tragedians. It seems surprising, even so, not that he considered baroque opera to be "a limbo of vanity," but that he found so little to say about the operas of Mozart, or Verdi's *Falstaff.* Only one opera kept springing to his mind as he reflected upon music, Beethoven's *Fidelio,* which was often used to make the point that the overtures were of necessity more truly dramatic than the numbers actually involved with the action. But Tovey quite genuinely found the dramatic action of *Fidelio* edifying; it could engage his full sympathies in a way that the operas of Wagner, Handel, most of Verdi (and some of Mozart?) could not.

V

Tovey's busiest period as a writer was in 1927–31, when he issued his "Companion" books and his annotated editions, revised his *Britannica* articles for the fourteenth edition, and wrote major essays on Gluck, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms as well as heaven knows how many program notes. The major Beethoven piece, "Some Aspects of Beethoven's Art-Forms," was written for the issue of *Music & Letters* in 1927 commemorating the centennial of the composer's death.

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The occasion seems to have inspired Tovey to work through two of his chief critical preoccupations—one theoretical, one practical—more fully here than anywhere else in his writings.

The theoretical one was his belief that every true work of art takes its unique form from its own material, irrespective of its strictness or freedom according to the superficial (or "jelly-mold") view of musical form. Tovey set out to demonstrate the freedom (or "uniqueness") of one of Beethoven's strictest (or "most normal") compositions, the Sonata in B-flat, op. 22, and then the fundamental "normality" of his most "unique" work, the Quartet in C-sharp minor, op. 131. Dealing with works in sonata style by Beethoven, rather than with chorale preludes by Bach, Tovey had much more refined critical tools at hand, and he deployed them at leisure. The result is as brilliant in realization as it is original in concept. We may not be quite persuaded that op. 131 approximates "that Bach-like condition in which the place of every note can be deduced from the scheme," but we can never hear the piece again as in any sense aberrant in form. The freshness extracted from op. 22 ought to serve as an object lesson to jelly-molders of all ages. If this is formalist criticism, it is of a kind that finds more life in the work of art than does most people's impressionism.

The other more practical preoccupation that Tovey aired thoroughly in the centennial article is his notorious skepticism about the "thematic process in music," as we have learned to call it from Rudolph Réti. Tovey insistently posed this as a polemical issue between himself and earlier unnamed, but mainly German, critics, and it has become a polemical issue again with post-Réti critics in England, such as Keller. Tovey's essential point was that musical form—which for him was equivalent to aesthetic content—does not depend on thematic relationships, even when these are unmistakable and overt. "Themes have no closer connexion with larger musical proportions than the colours of animals have with their skeletons." Therefore musical analysis built on thematic relationships that are less than unmistakable, on covert relationships, is as futile as literary analysis based on puns ("there is a B in both"). Music depends on tensions and arrivals, balances and resolutions, and these may or may not be reinforced by themes; in recapitulations, for example, the thematic return serves to reinforce the tonal return, which is primary, rather than the other way around. Tovey did not like to think that music existed in which various motifs, themes, transitions, figurations, and cadences might all be indiscriminately related. For some critics, a texture permeated with thematic relationships is richly unified; for him, such a texture was otiose and directionless. This must have been one of the main grounds for his antipathy toward Wagner, and one of many things that repelled him in Schoenberg.

In the article at hand, Tovey carefully explains just how far he will go with Beethoven in the matter of "thematic process." When, in the first movement of the *Archduke* Trio, a remote passage of trills and scales is derived step by step from the main theme, Tovey accepts this as a lucid process articulating the development, itself a part of the larger articulation of time. In the finale of op. 131, a brief *stretto* answer to the "mournful theme" first heard in bars 22–29 becomes ultimately, in bars 291–92,

> . . . an emphatic and unmistakable allusion to the first four notes of the fugue. For reasons already discussed, I am generally skeptical about such long-distance resemblances, where the composer has no means of enforcing his point; for instance, I shall never believe that Beethoven intended the transition passage to B flat in the first movement of the Ninth Symphony to foreshadow the choral finale which comes three-quarters of an hour afterwards. If he had meant anything by the resemblance, he could have made his meaning clear in the introduction to his finale, where he calls up the ghosts of the previous movements. But here, in the C sharp minor Quartet, he goes out of his way to accentuate his point; the point refers to the very beginning of the work, and not to some transitional passage heard only twice in its course; and not only is the point thus explicable but it has no other explanation. The other matter is the reappearance of the flat supertonic in a shuddering cadential passage that breaks in upon the height of the passion; having no connexion of theme with its surroundings, and requiring no such connexion.

The themeless cadential passage that recalls other flat supertonic effects caused Tovey no problem, of course. But almost incredibly, he did not recognize a connection with the fugue

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subject the *first* time the "mournful theme" occurs, in bars 22–29. Nor did he recognize, in the Adagio of the Sonata in D minor, op. 31, no. 2, a thematic connection between the ending six bars and any previous passage in the movement; "palmistry is not more debilitating to the mind" than efforts to trace such things. In *The Classical Style,* Charles Rosen has only to quote the two passages in question to make the relationship—a relationship of harmonic progression and melodic contour—self-evident. Rosen's analysis does not negate Tovey's point that the essence of the ending consists in its newness and its relative proportions. The ending is new and also not new, both at the same time, because the relationship is, exactly, a little obscure.

It seems clear today that in this whole matter Tovey's ideology was getting in the way of his ear, that his remarkable musical sensibility was inhibited by deeply ingrained instincts hardened into aesthetic dogma. Perhaps he feared that he would not keep the naïve listener with him if he taxed him with special subtleties. (But *themes* are what the *really* naïve listener likes best of all.) One does not have to reject Tovey's scale of priorities, only the rigidity of his own rejection of thematic relationships. What basically disturbed him in situations such as that in the D minor Sonata was, I am inclined to think, their ambiguity. He admired subtleties, but only subtleties that admitted of due resolution into the clear world of Victorian certainties; genuine ambiguities were not consonant with his image of Beethovenian soundness. Ambiguities disturbed him in the music of romanticism, too, about which he was never entirely easy. His attitude toward Chopin, Schumann, and Mendelssohn was chivalrous rather than affectionate; until the late years of his life, Berlioz aroused in him feelings of exasperation, amusement, and contempt, and Liszt aroused something closer to fury. Toward Wagner his attitude was equivocal in the extreme. He was quite aware that throughout the nineteenth century, emphasis on thematic relationships—overt and covert—went along with a decay of the musical values established by the Viennese classical masters. It is as though for Tovey, Beethoven was holding the line—the same line that Brahms, glumly, was still holding half a century later. That is another measure of Beethoven's centrality in Tovey's mind. It is not accidental that by far the greatest number of the attacks on thematic analysis that come up again and again in his writings come up in response to (or in defense of) music by Beethoven.

VI

So in his analysis of the *Eroica* Symphony Tovey definitely does *not* trace a derivation of the E-minor development theme from the opening theme, as Schenker, Riezler, Rosen, and others have done. The triadic figures in bars 24 and 109 are "new," too. But he writes unforgettably about a major crux in the movement, as he heard it—the reinterpretation of the C sharp in the opening theme as D flat in the recapitulation, the ensuing brief modulation to F major with its quality of "strange exaltation," the "swing of the pendulum" to the balancing key of D flat, and the immense scope that these digressions confirm or maintain in a movement of already unimaginable range and power. Do not matters of this sort, Tovey asked, mean more than thematic relationships to naïve *and* sophisticated listeners? The issue can be expressed, perhaps, as one between background unity and surface coherence. "Where are my favorite passages?" Schoenberg is said to have exclaimed on seeing a Schenker diagram of the *Eroica.* "Ah, there they are, in those tiny notes." But neither in the prose sections of Schenker's exhaustive monograph on the *Eroica* nor in the notes in the diagrams, however tiny, is there to be found any reference whatsoever to those crucial modulations.

Another very fine piece of criticism is the long essay on Beethoven's "Ninth Symphony in D minor, Op. 125—Its Place in Musical Art." This work touched Tovey very deeply, for at least two reasons. First, it was the decisive testing ground for his belief that absolute music could absorb nonmusical contents; in this respect, what the Ninth Symphony meant to Tovey was just about the opposite of what it meant to Wagner. Second, this symphony expresses more emphatically than any other work those nonmusical qualities of mind that Tovey admired in Beethoven. He never wrote better about basic musical movement than in reference to the introduction, development, and recapitulation of the first movement, and he wrote with uncanny sym-

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pathy for Beethoven's overriding philosophical idea, both in the "Ode to Joy" and in the symphony as a whole. On *Fidelio,* another work with strong nonmusical content, he wrote most trenchantly in a very original essay on the *Leonore* Overtures nos. 2 and 3. Discussing them in tandem gave him an opportunity to analyze two works of art in which the same content grew into two different "unique" forms. This is a more than usually close and subtle study of the implications of musical proportions and the articulation of the flux of time. Incidentally, Tovey never paid any attention to arguments that the *Leonore* no. 1 Overture was in fact composed first—a theory still upheld by Schmidt-Görg in 1970 and only finally laid to rest by Alan Tyson, on documentary evidence, since that time. Tovey accepted Nottebohm's date of 1807 because it fitted the stylistic evidence, as he saw it, and because it fitted his own theory of Beethoven's maturing understanding of the function of an opera overture. Since symphonic "drama" is more potent than drama on the stage, the action of *Leonore* was undercut by Beethoven's first two overtures; the simpler *Leonore* no. 1 Overture suited the opera better, and the blander *Fidelio* Overture of 1814 suited it best of all.

Some of Tovey's more penetrating critical lances were broken on behalf of certain Cinderellas and Ugly Ducklings: the Triple Concerto, the *Namensfeier* Overture, the Sonata in E-flat, op. 27, no. 1, and even the Fantasy, op. 77. As he remarked in the general introduction to the *Essays in Musical Analysis,* the writer of program notes necessarily assumes the stance of counsel for the defense. This attitude ran deeply in his criticism, in fact. Knocking music was not something Tovey enjoyed; what he felt he had to say about Liszt, Saint-Saëns, the "Interesting Historical Figures," and the moderns was said, usually, in hasty asides. But he was adept at selective statement, faint praise, and expressive silence, as well as more kittenish forms of veiled disapproval. He seldom criticized Beethoven as directly as in the famous essay on the Concerto in C minor, and one feels he did so there only because Beethoven's momentary miscalculation of concerto form (as Tovey explains it) was set right in the nick of time. As he himself said, he did not regard Beethoven as infallible, though probably it is only after getting to know Tovey's work well that one is actually ready to believe him.

It is a pity, perhaps, that the projected Beethoven book was not taken as an opportunity to discuss more thoroughly categories of music that Tovey did not ordinarily encounter when writing program notes. It is a thousand pities that Vincent d'Indy, and not Tovey, wrote the Beethoven article in Cobbett's *Cyclopaedic Survey of Chamber Music* (to which Tovey contributed the remarkable essays on Haydn and Brahms). But of course Tovey was never systematic, and the Beethoven book remained a torso when drafted before 1910 and again when revised in 1936. Certain chapters were never executed beyond a few pages and other longer ones were left obviously unfinished. The most striking thing about the book, no doubt, is its very concept: a book on Beethoven that covers neither his life nor his works, but deals step by step with basic technical means and then with musical "art-forms." The plan was to start off with "The Three Dimensions of Music"—rhythm, melody, and harmony. Typically enough, the draft as left by the author included three chapters dealing broadly with tonality, two (of which one is only a sketch) on rhythm, and none at all on melody. Then, after two illuminating chapters on sonata form, the energy flags: six pages on "The Rondo and Other Sectional Forms," twelve on variations, and a one-page stab at fugue.

Beethoven contains analyses and insights not found elsewhere in Tovey's work, as well as familiar ones in new and always newly interesting reformulations, such as we encounter again and again throughout his writings. As a whole, however, the *Companion to Beethoven's Pianoforte Sonatas* is a more satisfactory book, despite an unaccustomed dryness brought about by the routine tabulation of analytical descriptions (Keller's "eminently professional tautology"). It is the one large study that Tovey really worked out systematically, and the rigorous format had a good side effect in restraining his prose style—that brilliant, donnish, discursive, epigrammatic, self-indulgent prose style which is utterly winning and also, too often, plain confusing. No one would read Tovey if it were not for that prose, but it does not always hold to Beethovenian standards of normality and responsibility. Discipline is a welcome feature of the

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Companion, which has in any case its luminous pages as well as its dry ones.

VII

"Beethoven is a complete artist," Tovey wrote at the very start of his draft of the Beethoven book. "If the term is rightly understood, he is one of the completest that ever lived." Like so many of the terms thrown at the reader with Tovey's aggressively commonsensical spin, this one is hard to field; but in some sense he himself was also one of the completest musicians who ever lived. Our latest musical dictionary calls him a "musical historian, pianist, composer and conductor," a list that is obviously only half as long as it should be: he was also a legendary teacher, a musical analyst, theorist, music critic, and aesthetician. (This last designation, like that of "musical historian," would have surprised Tovey, but if used informally it seems perfectly just.) If the term *criticism* is taken as he himself took it, to denote a synoptic activity encompassing aesthetic judgment and technical analysis, it is as a critic that Tovey is now chiefly remembered. Not many listeners can still remember him as a performer, though no doubt the piano always remained his first love.

But one is struck, still, by the wholeness of his musical activity and experience. His endless stream of program notes grew directly out of his work as pianist and conductor of the Reid Symphony Orchestra in Edinburgh; besides analytical and critical comments, they contain many astute practical remarks about performance. The composition of his opera, *The Bride of Dionysus,* helped him understand musical aesthetics, as he never tired of pointing out. His occasionally brilliant musicological aperçus were arrived at in reference to music that he was performing and writing about in consequence. At this distance in time, what is most admirable in Tovey's writing is its steady interpenetration of aesthetic ideas, critical judgments, analytical descriptions, and (sometimes) historical insights. They are inseparable in Tovey's work because he wanted them so, because he had a fundamental commitment to wholeness.

This is the real basis for the continuing vitality of Tovey's writing. It may be admitted that his aesthetic ideas do not hold together so very well, that his criticism is to a certain extent simplistic, and that his analysis has clear limitations. We must also forgo his closed world of Victorian certainties—his unswerving faith in the sensibilities of the naïve listener, his vision of classical music that is crystal-clear and without ambiguities, his circumscribed body of "perfect" works of art focused on the *oeuvre* of Beethoven. But there is a continuing need for a criticism that pays attention both to technique and to aesthetic results. We read Tovey because (one last quotation) "All's not false that's taught in public school"—and because basic education is less well defined today than it was in his time. His emphasis on the rhythmic surface of music is not dated, either, and will never be. Tovey would have shut his mind to modern musical analysis, but it is a notable fact that some of the most promising strains of it are now dealing essentially with rhythm.

With whatever old-fashioned or defective tools, Tovey fashioned a portrait of Beethoven that lives, as other portraits of him do not live, because it takes account of so many of the essential sides of that protean personality. The composer of the "Ode to Joy," the *Hammerklavier* fugue, op. 22, and op. 131 will not yield very far to a populist criticism that hesitates to broach difficult matters, to an impressionist criticism that evades technical analysis, or to a formalist criticism that disdains incorrigibilities. Tovey's grasp was, if not "complete," a great deal more complete than that of most critics. This is not to say that he was equally effective over the entire range of his art. Beethoven, as we have seen, brought out the best in him, and for richness, consistency, and completeness, Tovey's Beethoven stands out as the most impressive achievement, perhaps, yet produced by the art of music criticism.

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Panic

PHILIP BOOTH

It is to be out
of familiar walls
with no place left
but the Halfway
House far up
the block: it is,
this first after
noon, to carefully
ask your new self
for a walk beyond
the drugstore around
the block, but then
to have to refuse:
it is to remember
how trees grow out
of the sidewalk, to
figure how this time
to face him: the one
with hair like old vines,
who steps out of
nowhere, trying to
take you over, back
where he always
comes from; it is
having moved here
instead: here to
sleep, to learn
to get up: it is,
at supper the always
first night, to
try to ask for
the salt. And having it
passed, it's to weep.

● PHILIP BOOTH is on leave from Syracuse University, finishing his new book of poems in Maine.

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Lords of Life, Kings in Exile

Identity and Sexuality in D. H. Lawrence

ROBERT LANGBAUM

Just as we oversimplify Wordsworth when we think of him as the poet of nature, so we oversimplify Lawrence when we think of him only as the apostle of sex. Wordsworth might just as appropriately be called the poet of mind, since he never writes about nature without writing about mind; and Lawrence might just as appropriately be called the great writer on identity, since he never writes about sex without writing about identity.

Lawrence came to realize, in the remarkable intellectual leap that carried him from *Sons and Lovers* to *The Sisters* (the first draft of *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*), that successful sexuality flows from a certain phase of identity and that the modern sexual problem is an identity problem. A properly reciprocal sexual relation is impossible so long as each partner is locked up in the modern separated ego. In *Women in Love*, Ursula and Birkin achieve relative success in love when they learn to lose their individuality and then find it again—when they are able to meet as archetypes, at the unconscious phase of identity, and then pass back to their conscious selves without the need, apparent in Gudrun and Gerald, to seek oblivion, to destroy one mode of being for the sake of the other. For Gudrun and Gerald, oblivion is the only antidote to consciousness; only by depersonalizing themselves through oblivion can they join sexually—they cannot "meet" as persons.

Ursula and Birkin's successful intercourse in Sherwood Forest merely confirms a "meeting" already achieved at the properly archetypal phase of identity. She has already, tracing with her fingertips "the straight downflow of his thighs," apprehended his male potency and seen him as one of "the strange inhuman sons of God." He has already, through her touch, apprehended her womanhood as "a new mavelous flower opened at his knees." These are not rhetorical embellishments but actual transformations of being. As in Yeats, sexual desire derives from archetypal apprehension.

Lawrence's preoccupation with problems of identity shows clearly in the critical essays he wrote in the 1920s, after he had published *Rainbow* and *Women in Love*. In all these essays, discussions of art turn into discussions of personality; it is simply assumed that the quality of a work derives from the identity structure of the artist and his contemporaries. Thus, in a bold little essay called "Surgery for the Novel—or a Bomb," the modern serious novel of Proust, Joyce, Dorothy Richardson is shown to be dying of the same morbid self-consciousness that is killing our civilization. Since these novelists conceive their characters as locked up in a circumscribed conscious ego cut off from objective reality, what can they do except analyze ever more minutely the thoughts and feelings that go on within that circumference while the character is doing something utterly trivial and unrelated like buttoning on gloves? Such "purely emotional and self-analytical stunts" no longer interest Lawrence because the value system behind them no longer really interests anyone—the value system, which originally

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gave birth to the novel, that declares the importance of every last thing happening to the individual. The death rattle of that system sounds through the oversubtle analysis and produces thoughts of the bomb that might blow up the whole existing scheme of things. The interesting question, therefore, is: "What feelings do we want to carry through into the *next* epoch? . . . What is the underlying impulse in us that will provide the motive power for a new state of things, when this democratic-industrial-lovey-dovey-darling-take-me-to-mamma stage of things is bust?"

Like Yeats, Lawrence sees the weakness of the identity structures produced by our democratic, humanitarian, industrial culture. And he is, like Yeats, preparing for the identity structures of the coming antidemocratic, antihumanitarian, neopagan culture; that is what *Women in Love* is about. It is about the difference between the impersonality toward which Ursula and Birkin evolve and the impersonality sought by Gerald, Gudrun, Loerke. Ursula and Birkin prepare for the next epoch through rebirth of the individualist self, Gerald through its death, Gudrun and Loerke through its disintegration. Birkin says we must burst out of our old selves or else wither away inside them; and this essay suggests, in a Yeatsian analogy between art and personality, that we must do surgery on the novel and the individualist self it celebrates, or else novel and individualist culture will have to be blown up. "The novel has a future" if, instead of "inventing new sensations in the old line," it gives us "new, really new feelings," breaking "a way through, like a hole in the wall." The breakthrough is a new identity structure; only from that could really new feelings emerge.

"Art and Morality" makes clear that modes of feeling and seeing derive from identity structure. Lawrence examines "the moral repugnance for a Cézanne still-life" felt by ordinary people, who rightly sense an assault on their inherited geography of self and not-self and the man-centered, ego-centered values such a geography implies. The modern visualization of self is confirmed by the camera, which enables man to see himself as a complete entity definitely outlined against the scene; so that nature becomes mere background. This absolute separation of self and not-self is equated with reality: "even god could not see *differently*." Against this view that "the me that is *seen*, is me," Lawrence sets the primitive man who never had a complete view of himself. If we imagine a world without mirrors, in which men saw themselves reflected only in water or shadows, we can understand why primitive men could not conceive themselves as shut up in an outline. "Like men in a dark room, they only *felt* their own existence surging in the darkness of other creatures."

Lawrence is formulating a notion of external self, in a way that combines Wordsworth and Yeats. He is Wordsworthian in regarding the external self as primitive and natural. He is Yeatsian in understanding that this self has been undone through humanist culture, through all that has happened to Western man "since Greece first broke the spell of 'darkness,' " and that the external self may be recovered in the coming era signaled by the sophisticated art of Cézanne. Cézanne's apples offend us because they refuse to take their significance from our man-centered view; they assert their own selfhood, their own multiplicity of relations, and therefore do not *look* like apples. "The universe," says Lawrence in a passage that combines Wordsworth and Yeats by way of an Einsteinian relativism,

> is like Father Ocean, a stream of all things slowly moving. We move, and the rock of ages moves. And since we move and move for ever, in no discernible direction, there is no centre to the movement, to us. To us, the centre shifts at every moment. . . . There is nothing to do but to maintain a true relationship to the things we move with and amongst and against. The apple, like the moon, has still an unseen side. The movement of Ocean will turn it round to us, or us to it.*

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Lawrence draws from this world-view a moral that is highly Wordsworthian in its emphasis on organic relatedness to nature. "And nothing is true, or good, or right, except in its own living relatedness to its own circumambient universe; to the things that are in the stream with it." The moral is also Yeatsian in that this relatedness is an ideal for culture, for Unity of Being. Works of art are cited as examples of the relatedness between various artists and their different universes; and design in art is defined as the total recognition of all possible relations among the elements depicted, as the breakthrough to a fourth-dimensional or absolute vision of relative relationships. Lawrence's fourth dimension differs from Blake's fourfold vision, which transforms life into art, because Lawrence settles for simple naturalism in attributing this breakthrough not to culture, artifice, or even imagination, but simply to the use of all our natural organs of perception. "You can't *invent* a design. You recognize it, in the fourth dimension. That is, with your blood and your bones, as well as with your eyes." Although in doing without a concept of imagination Lawrence is theoretically more naïve than Wordsworth, he is certainly more Wordsworthian than Blakean or Yeatsian. He in fact reconstitutes the self by revitalizing Wordsworth's view of it as organically related to nature.

Although Lawrence was deeply read in Wordsworth and almost always refers to him with respect, Wordsworth's mode of characterization seems to have influenced him by way of Hardy. Lawrence might be talking of Wordsworth's "Michael" when, in *The Study of Thomas Hardy*, he says that there exists in Hardy's novels "a great background, vital and vivid, which matters more than the people who move upon it." In *The Return of the Native*, "the real sense of tragedy is got from the setting. . . . The Heath persists." The characters "are one year's accidental crop." The most admirable characters are "rooted . . . in the soil of all things, and living from the root!" This also describes the relation of character to landscape in Wordsworth, except that in Wordsworth the enduring landscape *compensates* for the passing of human lives.

In "Morality and the Novel," Lawrence's view of life and art and his way of dissolving the distinction between them is remarkably Wordsworthian. Art, he says, "is a revelation of the perfected relation, at a certain moment, between a man and a sunflower. . . . And this perfected relation between man and his circumambient universe is life itself, for mankind. It has the fourth-dimensional quality of eternity and perfection. Yet it is momentaneous." The analysis applies to all those poems of Wordsworth in which the beholder transforms into significance a flower, landscape, or person through a visionary moment, an epiphany. Like Lawrence's statement, these poems are also prescriptions for life; the poems imply that in life we make our souls through privileged moments and that the poems themselves describe and derive their form from such moments in life. This transforming vision is what Lawrence means by a "pure" or "living" relationship. The relationship remains living as long as the significance remains relative to the particular relationships through which it was perceived, as long as the celandine or leech gatherer is held in a "delicate, for ever trembling and changing *balance*" between the real flower or leech gatherer and the significance the poet sees in them, as long as the object remains fluid, flowing into symbol then back again to perceived object.

The novel for Lawrence is the supreme genre because it is the most relativistic:

> . . . the highest example of subtle inter-relatedness that man has discovered. Everything is true in its own time, place, circumstance, and untrue outside of its own place, time, circumstance. If you try to nail anything down, in the novel, either it kills the novel, or the novel gets up and walks away with the nail. Morality in the novel is the trembling instability of the balance.

Wordsworth, too, is against nailing down the "sentiment of Being" into a fixed symbol abstracted from the moment of perception and transferable to other contexts. Wordsworth-

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ian memory carries the past moment of perception alive, whole, and changing into the present. Morality for Lawrence and Wordsworth means giving your allegiance to experience rather than theory. But Lawrence goes on to explore the conflict between characters that corresponds to the epistemological conflict between perceiver and perceived object. The novel, he says, rescues us from "the toils of old relationships" to reveal, through "the living moment," real relationships that have not yet been formulated. In the greatest because most polar human relationship, that between man and woman, one partner tries to impose a relationship by nailing down the other as his instrument. If, however, there is a "balance" whereby each is "true to himself, herself, his own manhood, her own womanhood," then a relationship emerges that is reciprocally fluid, as in a Cézanne still-life where there is no center and all selfhoods remain intact.

This is the relationship that Birkin describes as a star equilibrium. Through exploring the unconscious, Lawrence justifies psychologically the kind of characterization I consider lyrical, because the person is portrayed at a depth, anterior to manners, where he has the existential potency of a natural object, of Cézanne's apples or Van Gogh's sunflowers. Wordsworth explained that he was trying to portray the leech gatherer as an existence rather than a character: "What is brought forward? 'A lonely place, a Pond' 'by which an old man *was*' . . . not stood, not sat, but '*was.*' " The old man's *existence* breaks upon us as a marvel because he is portrayed in inextricable relation to the landscape—as though he were in fluid transition between animate and inanimate, like a boulder so unaccountably alone on a bald hilltop that it seems to have moved itself there; the boulder's fluidity is then evoked through the opposite case of a sea beast that at first seems part of the rocky ledge on which it rests. The transition between animate and inanimate becomes the counterpart of the transitional state between natural and supernatural that the old man, with his frail hold on life, seems to inhabit; so that the poem establishes an organic line of existence from rock to spirit which is not hierarchical, as in the traditional concept of the Great Chain of Being, but contained within a single identity.

In "Why the Novel Matters," Lawrence opposes the division of self between body and spirit. "My hand, as it writes these words, . . . is just as much *me* as is my brain, my mind, or my soul. Why should I imagine that there is a *me* which is more *me* than my hand is? Since my hand is absolutely alive, me alive." Lawrence takes over just the biological sense of identity that unites Wordsworth with Yeats; Yeats's phrase, "the thinking of the body," perfectly expresses this monistic view of identity. The novel is "the one bright book of life" because it deals with the whole man in his aliveness, and not, like the scientist, with the parts of a man who must be posited as dead in order to be analyzed or dissected (this recalls Wordsworth's "We murder to dissect"). The novelist is "superior to the saint, the scientist, the philosopher, and the poet, who are all masters of different bits of man alive, but never gets the whole hog."

"We should ask for no absolutes," says Lawrence. "All things flow and change." "In all this change," however,

> I maintain a certain integrity. But woe betide me if I try to put my finger on it. If I say of myself, I am this, I am that!—then, if I stick to it, I turn into a stupid fixed thing like a lamp-post. I shall never know wherein lies my integrity, my individuality, my me. I *can* never know it. It is useless to talk about my ego. That only means that I have made up an *idea* of myself.

Although he has more faith than Beckett in the self's continuity and vitality, Lawrence broaches the mystery of identity as Beckett does in *The Unnameable*, where the self is unnameable and eludes the speaker every time he tries to name it.

For Lawrence, as for Blake and Wordsworth, the problem of identity begins with a fall into self-consciousness and the consequent division into a real or subjective and a false or social self. When a man

> becomes too much aware of objective reality, and of his own isolation in the face of a universe of objective reality, the core of his identity splits, his nucleus collapses, his innocence or his naïveté perishes, and he becomes only a subjective-objective reality, a divided thing hinged together but not strictly individual. While a man remains a man,

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before he falls and becomes a social individual, he innocently feels himself altogether within the great continuum of the universe.

Our aim is to recover the sense of connection. Sexuality is a way of recovering it; but for most modern people, locked into ego and self-consciousness, sexuality must be purchased at the price of obliterated consciousness and obliterated sense of the partner's otherness, of his or her real existence.

The closing off of mind from feeling, of consciousness from unconsciousness, of ego from archetype, produce the modern problems of identity and sexuality. There should be a reciprocal flow between consciousness and unconsciousness, a sexuality that heightens consciousness all over the body, an individuality open to connection through the interlocking relation of opposite archetypes. Instead, there is in modern people the split between consciousness and unconsciousness that makes sex a clash of hard-shelled egos, each out to dominate the other and exploit the other as an instrument for sexual gratification. This is sadomasochism. In *Rainbow*, Lawrence traces through three generations of nineteenth-century Brangwens the developing split between consciousness and the unconsciousness that shades into universal unconsciousness. In *Women in Love*, he portrays a twentieth-century world in which all identity structures are split, both within themselves and from the universe, and all sexuality is consequently sadomasochistic. Ursula and Birkin are, in their recovery of connection through rebirth of self, miraculous exceptions.

The "carbon" identity, described in Lawrence's letter to Garnett (June 5, 1914), is the phase of identity that makes connection with the universe. It can be best understood if we start by recalling the way Wordsworth's Lucy and leech gatherer are characterized in continuum with the landscape. "That which is physic," Lawrence writes,

> non-human, in humanity, is more interesting to me than the old-fashioned human element—which causes one to conceive a character in a certain moral scheme and make him consistent. . . . what is interesting in the laugh of the woman is the same as the binding of the molecules of steel or their action in heat; it is the inhuman will . . . that fascinates me. I don't so much care about what the woman *feels*—in the ordinary usage of the word. That presumes an *ego* to feel with. I only care about what the woman *is*—what she IS—inhumanly, physiologically, materially . . . what she *is* as a phenomenon.

"What she IS" recalls Wordsworth's "an old man *was*"—a *was*ness evoked through the leech gatherer's reduction to a stone. The difference is that Wordsworth uses the reduction to achieve transcendence, whereas Lawrence studiously avoids transcendence.

Lawrence goes on to talk of egos as allotropies or variations of a single substance contained in all nature.

> You mustn't look in my novel [a draft of *Rainbow*] for the old stable *ego*—of the character. There is another *ego*, according to whose action the individual is unrecognizable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same single radically unchanged element. (Like as diamond and coal are the same pure single element of carbon. The ordinary novel would trace the history of the diamond—but I say, "Diamond, what! This is carbon." And my diamond might be coal or soot, and my theme is carbon.)

The "logic" of a character's actions, his unity or identity, is not to be found within the ego, in rational or moral consistency, but in the force, the "inhuman will," that flows through him and all matter. The unity is in the external field of energized matter to which the character belongs. Lawrence says in this letter that he will portray the "carbon," the external inhuman identity that the character shares with nature, rather than the "diamond" or ego, the special temporary variation that sets the character apart. But in *The Rainbow* Lawrence actually portrays the "diamond" by referring it back to the "carbon." He includes sex as part of the larger electromagnetic force that binds the molecules in all nature.

This view of identity as a continuum, in which human merges into animate and animate into inanimate, is most clearly exemplified in Lawrence's best animal poems, which offer mainly implicit models for the Unity of Being we have lost and must recover. In the beautifully quiet "A Doe at Evening," the model is explicit. Beholding the doe as part of

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the landscape—"she pricked a fine black blotch / on the sky"—the poet regresses to the life they have in common and "knows" her as a sexual force in an epiphany involving a transformation of his own being: he feels himself turn into an antlered stag.

The wittily magical tortoise poems celebrate life at that first verge where it moves the most unlikely of lumps into animation. "What a huge vast inanimate it is," says the poet to the baby tortoise, "that you must row against, / What an incalculable inertia." Sex among the tortoises is grotesque in its blank unconsciousness:

> He is dumb, he is visionless,
> Conceptionless.
> His black, sad-lidded eye sees but beholds not
> As her earthen mound moves on.

The inevitable question reads like a parody of "Leda and the Swan," although Yeats's poem postdates Lawrence's:

> Does she know
> As she moves eternally slowly away?
> Or is he driven against her with a bang . . .
> All knowledgeless?

The mating, even more than Leda's, is fraught with human consequences; for it recalls the organism's first loss of unified identity: the tortoise has been "crucified into sex/ . . . Divided into passionate duality"—he anticipates the dismemberment of Osiris.

In the uncanny "Tortoise Shout," one of Lawrence's greatest poems, this dumb creature emits at orgasm a scream in which Lawrence, undergoing the regression that is his equivalent for spiritual experience ("till the last plasm of my body was melted back / To the primeval rudiments of life, and the secret"), hears the "First faint scream, / Out of life's unfathomable dawn" that anticipates all the cries of nature and civilization, of the whole bloody glorious adventure set going by the need to recover our lost unity.

> Sex, which breaks us into voice, sets us calling across the deeps, calling, calling for the complement,
> Singing, and calling, and singing again, being answered, having found.
> Torn, to become whole again, after long seeking for what is lost,
> The same cry from the tortoise as from Christ, the Osiris-cry of abandonment.

That is where Lawrence finds his gods, and therefore the pattern of civilization, at the ultimate point of regression.

"Fish," instead, presents the fish as complete in himself, as making no distinction between self and environment:

> As the waters roll
> Roll you.
> The waters wash,
> You wash in oneness
> And never emerge.

Therefore, "Never know"; for knowledge comes from separation. In a stunning feat of imaginative projectiveness, Lawrence evokes the fish's indissolubly internal-external sense of his being:

> To sink, and rise, and go to sleep with the waters;
> To speak endless inaudible wavelets into the wave;
> To breathe from the flood at the gills,
> Fish-blood slowly running next to the flood, extracting fish-fire.

When Lawrence infers from this that the fish is beyond him—"*His God stands outside my God*"—he means that the fish's organization of the sensed world is entirely different from his, and that gods, as he says in "Art and Morality," represent our organization of the sensed world and therefore our identity since we *are* what we sense. In reminding us, however, that "Jesus was called The Fish," he reminds us that Jesus came to restore our lost Unity of Being. In *The Man Who Died,* his revision of the Gospels, Lawrence suggests that the ego was nailed on the cross and that resurrection means recovery of our primal self through "the greater life of the body"—it means Osiris recomposed, identity as continuum.

In the animal poems, Lawrence moves from animal to god not through transcendence or transformation, the entranced vision of *Resolution and Independence,* but through intensification of the animal's being until the animal's unconsciousness becomes, in contrast to our consciousness, the equivalent of the god's superconsciousness. The animal's "strangeness," or existential superiority over us, becomes the equivalent of the god's exis-

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tential superiority. Godhead is for Lawrence the culminating phase of identity. All this is especially apparent in "Snake," a minor masterpiece in which Lawrence comes closest to achieving the aim of all his animal poems—to let godhead emerge inevitably from naturalistic evocation of the animal's nonhuman otherness.

The details, casually accumulated, all point to the snake's "strangeness" and lordliness. He is strangely *there* at the water trough, having taken precedence over the poet:

> He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
> And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough
> . . . . . .
> He sipped with his straight mouth,
> Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
> Silently.

The snake embodies the golden earth-color and earth-heat of Sicily in July; he has awesomely come up from the underworld. The word "god" is finally broached in the lines where the snake fully manifests his power of identity, his nonchalance and self-containment:

> He drank enough
> And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
> And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air, so black,
> Seeming to lick his lips,
> And looked around like a god, unseeing into the air.

Earlier the unseeingness had been compared to that of cattle; now it is godlike.

Overawed, the poet has resisted the human education that bade him kill the golden venomous snake. But as the snake withdraws into his hole, the poet unaccountably throws a log at him, thus destroying the image of sanctity by forcing the snake to pull in the rest of him with "undignified haste." In his immediate regret the poet thinks of the albatross. Like the ancient mariner, he has violated the sanctity of nature and has evolved a sense of sin from a natural experience. But here the violation comes from the poet's inescapable fear of sex. As the snake "put his head into that dreadful hole, / And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders, and entered farther," the poet is overcome by "horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole." This image of sexual entrance fills us with horror, too, and we realize that our fear of snakes is a fear of the phallus, of the sexual power our culture has driven underground.

When Lawrence calls the snake "one of the lords of life," he uses a term that provides the model for fully realized identity in the novels. And when he calls the snake "a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld / Now due to be crowned again," he introduces, despite his generally linear view of history, a Yeatsian idea of cycles. The chthonic or phallic god will be worshipped again in the coming neopagan era. The difference is that for Lawrence godhead is not a supernatural incarnation. The snake remains a real snake; he was worshipped because his shape is phallic and really does, like the phallus, embody life force. "In those days," when gods were really alive, says a character in *St. Mawr,* "you saw the thing, you never saw the God in it: I mean in the tree or the fountain or the animal." That is the aim of Lawrence's animal poems, to evoke the god as the essence of the animal's life or identity.

This is another version of Wordsworth's aim to "see into the life of things." Lawrence revitalizes Wordsworth's sense of organic identity by rejecting those Wordsworthian visual transformations that had come to seem mere idealizing impositions of meaning upon the natural object. Instead Lawrence confirms, through knowledge of Darwin and Freud, Wordsworth's evolutionary intuition of identity as continuum—as evolving from inanimate to unconscious animate to thought that passes out of and back to the blood. The "life of things" means spiritual force to Wordsworth, sexual force to Lawrence; and it is easier for us nowadays to believe in sex than spirit. Sex also seems more rudimentary and unconscious than spirit and therefore more vital—for in Lawrence, as in Wordsworth, the more unconscious the more vital. Lawrence revitalizes Wordsworth's organicism by projecting sex as the binding and creative force—a force that it requires no transformations, no concepts of the super-

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natural, to see as miracle and mystery. Thus he can say about the sexual intercourse of whales:

> And over the bridge of the whale's strong phallus,
> linking the wonder of whales
> the burning archangels under the sea keep passing, back and forth,
> keep passing, archangels of bliss.

This is not presented as supernatural transformation. The monumental magnitude of the whales' intercourse makes sufficiently clear that intercourse is for them and all animals a climax of bliss, heaven. The lack of transformation ("Bavarian Gentians" is the notable exception) makes Lawrence's poetry simpler, less associatively rich than Wordsworth's—and less substantial, since the assertions of archetypal or mythical identity are not substantiated by a change in the perceived reality.

It is in his fiction that Lawrence equals Wordsworth in stature; for there he explicitly transforms his people by carrying their identity back to the point in unconsciousness where it can be manifested, not through action or dialogue, but only through external embodiments of life force which sometimes take shapes that are animals in the same sense as they are gods. When Lawrence uses animals in his fiction, he moves from people to animals to gods as a way of moving from the ordinary to the archetypal or mythical self, then back to a reconstructed individuality that oscillates between animal and god.

In the short novels, *The Fox* and *St. Mawr,* and in certain episodes in the longer novels, Lawrence poses animals on the scene to suggest that the characters are being brought into touch with their unconscious life. A character may find in an animal the image of his deepest desire, and fall in love when he recognizes in the animal his lover's true self. He discovers at the same time his own true self through its object of desire. It is only when men and women recognize each other's unconscious selves that they can fall genuinely in love and thus find their own true selves. The sexual problem of our time comes from the inability of modern people to find their way back to their unconscious selves. But they must do more than that. In *The Fox* and *St. Mawr,* the fox and the stallion merely start the heroines on the road to self-discovery through discovery of their unconscious desires; the heroines must progress to an integration of unconsciousness with consciousness, which in fact they never achieve.

Lawrence would certainly agree with Yeats that "there is some one myth for every man, which, if we but knew it, would make us understand all he did and thought." Once he conceived of "carbon" identity, Lawrence thought that every person has his external self in some animal or landscape that represents his object of desire. In *Women in Love,* Gudrun becomes sexually attracted to Gerald through her visual transformations of him into arctic wolf and Norse god; his mastery of mare and rabbit shows her the kind of sadomasochistic sexuality she wants with him. Gerald and Gudrun find their psychic landscape in the snowbound Alps; whereas Birkin and Ursula, who accompanied them, finally flee the snow for the flowery earth of Italy. Self-realization for Lawrence is the process by which a character comes to know what moon or water, flowery earth or frozen waste means to him, of coming to understand how all his life is a fulfillment and realization of a self that can only be symbolized since it exists prior to mentality and verbalization.

In *The Fox,* March's "inner mind took no notice of what she saw." Her sight of the fox is visionary, the objectification of an image of maleness deep inside her: "She lowered her eyes, and suddenly saw the fox. He was looking at her. His chin was pressed down, and his eyes were looking up. They met her eyes. And he knew her." She falls in love with Henry when, in another visual transformation, she recognizes him as the fox: "He had a ruddy, roundish face, with fairish hair. . . . His eyes were blue, and very bright and sharp. On his cheeks, on the fresh ruddy skin were fine, fair hairs, like a down, but sharper." Later the same features, "the ruddy, elate face," appear godlike: "he seemed strangely tall and bright and looming." Fox-god is an external shape from which Henry emerges to fulfill his individuality and March's. Henry recognizes the female beneath March's masculine clothes, because he sees her first as a hare, as quarry, and then as a woman he must protect. They

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have progressed to a fully human relation, which March cannot sustain once Henry is out of *sight* and can no longer provide a visual link to her unconscious self. When she writes a letter breaking off their engagement, Henry regresses to the role of fox; he returns to take her by force, and she unconsciously wants to be taken that way, to have her consciousness overwhelmed. That is why their marriage is unsatisfactory. He has conquered, she has surrendered. They no longer "meet" reciprocally as persons.

The "carbon" identity embodied as animal and god in fox or golden stallion resembles Yeats's external archetypes that are knowable through an external race memory. The difference is that Yeats's world of external souls, his *anima mundi,* is half-Platonic, half-psychological; whereas Lawrence's unconscious is entirely naturalistic, psychological, Darwinian. Lawrence dissolves the realistically conceived individual back into the elements out of which life arose, and then rediscovers those primordial shapes that men first delineated out of earth, air, water, light, as a way of evolving their own sense of identity. (The fox first emerges, in March's eyes, from copper-colored evening sunlight; then Henry emerges from the fox.) Like Yeats, Lawrence reascends the stairway that Western man has been descending since Periclean Greece; he turns from internalized individuality back to external, archetypal identity, in order to root the modern separated ego in a vibrant individuality open to connection with other people and the universe.

Yeats and Lawrence return to archetypal identity not, as many people think, to destroy but rather to renew and enlarge our withering individuality by bringing it to birth again from the shapes out of which it originally evolved. Paul Morel's problem, in *Sons and Lovers,* is that he can love Miriam only as individual or conscious soul and Clara only as archetype or unconscious body. The aim of all Lawrence's work is to heal that split through what we might call dialectical regression. For Lawrence, godhead is the existential potency of our animal life brought to total consciousness—a total consciousness as alien to us as the animal's total unconsciousness. Human individuality is the uneasy, changing fluid relation between the two poles of animal and god, and requires for its self-definition that the poles be as vivid and definite as possible. There is hope for us only if our modern self-conscious individuality can regress in order to salvage all that is best of its freedom and sensitivity, in order to gather strength to go forward into a strangely inimical future where we will have to face conditions human beings have never faced before.

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The Night Watchman State

GEORGE KATEB

ANARCHY, STATE, AND UTOPIA. *By Robert Nozick. Basic Books. $12.95.*

There should be a growing fear of the state in America, and I think there is. I speak of *fear,* not of mere annoyance or grievance. We should fear the government because of its humiliating powers. It can destroy civilization and ruin nature with its nuclear weapons; there is no crime, foreign or domestic, of which it has not shown itself capable; it is all-present, full of busyness, attention, and intrusion; it steadily encroaches on the person and his rights. Competencies for action create the will for action; the will constantly seeks to refine the competencies. The state's power unmans its citizens. The habits and procedures of constitutional democracy seem less and less able to resist these tendencies. When resistance does seem to succeed, as in the affair of Richard Nixon, the exertions are stupendously costly in time and energy, and create guilt and an insidious repentance. At the same time, there are pressures which "well-intentioned" men in government feel. The pressures of numbers, wants, threatened scarcity, empire, and ferociously futile dissidence are there to make sure that the competencies are used or flaunted with an easier conscience.

The sense of humiliation deepens, but we are not slaves yet. We are less free, less able to think that the state is for us and under our control. But we are not slaves yet. Only, we need help; we must also learn to help ourselves, though without a clear understanding of what to do or whether anything can be done. The likeliest helper, the Supreme Court, has defaulted, thanks to Richard Nixon. For the moment, the task may only be theoretical. If we are asleep, the theorist can awaken us; if we are awake, he can sharpen our urge to respond. This is the time for a new Tom Paine. We need a revised and refreshed theory of limited government. A large part of such a theory, but not the whole of it, must be devoted to the person and his rights. Does the widely praised book by Robert Nozick give us help in the theoretical task?

The answer is no, not very much. Nozick, who teaches philosophy at Harvard, is a writer of angelic intelligence. His faculties of reasoning and imagination are rare; his learning is enormous and interconnected. I don't think that I could ever win an argument with him, or tell him something he hadn't already thought of. His ability to surround a subject, to anticipate objection, to see through weakness and pretense, to extract all the implications of a contention, to ask a huge number of relevant questions about a seemingly settled matter, to enlarge into full significance what has only been sketched by others, is amazing. But his book does not do—how shall I put it?—what I think must be done. Although antistate, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* does not provide a philosophical defense of the person that reaches to the true danger. The book also may increase the possibility of other kinds of mischief.

It would be foolish of me to condemn Nozick for not writing a book that answers my purposes, my view of what the danger is. That would be to condemn him for disagreeing. I hold him to a standard because the underlying moral basis for the antistate

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SLAVERY AND THE NUMBERS GAME

A Critique of *TIME ON THE CROSS*

by Herbert G. Gutman

"The more preposterous the assertions a book on history makes, the greater the initial acclaim it is likely to receive, especially from non-historians. Correction often is slow to catch up. In the case of *Time on the Cross* the expert critics have already left gaping holes in a flimsy but pretentious structure. Now Herbert Gutman practically demolishes it."—Richard N. Current.

No scholarly book on American history published in recent years has been as widely acclaimed in the popular press as *Time on the Cross*, by cliometricians Roger W. Fogel and Stanley Engerman. In the words of the publisher, the book "challenges virtually every traditional assumption that has been made about the material condition of southern slaves."

However, as Herbert Gutman contends, many of Fogel and Engerman's new interpretations—e.g., that the use of harsh punishment, the breakup of families, the sexual exploitation of slaves, occurred much less frequently than historians have assumed, that in fact "the conditions of the lives of slaves compared favorably with those of free industrial workers"—these interpretations are to a substantial extent based on non-facts, pseudostatistics, the misuse of quantitative data, and the misreading of conventional scholarship.

In SLAVERY AND THE NUMBERS GAME, Gutman has, in the words of economist Richard Sutch, "dissected Fogel and Engerman's arguments and exposed the hidden assumptions and ideological preconceptions upon which they are based. He has removed the esoteric jargon and cumbersome mathematics . . . and explained what they actually did in clear English. He has countered the major findings of *Time on the Cross* with new research. He presents evidence of error after error in Fogel and Engerman's computations and citations. The result is devastating."

This original review essay in the *Journal of Negro History* has been reset and reedited for this publication.

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theory he works out is a conception of the person that is the perfect basis for the anti-state theory that I think needs working out. Furthermore, his conception hardly provides the basis for his own theory. On these subjects there cannot be any strict entailments and derivations; political reasoning is not the same as geometry. Still, one can speak of arguments as going, or not going, together. Nozick's conception of the person goes well with the demand that constitutional limitations on the state be protected, strengthened, and creatively applied to new conditions; while it does not go well with the theory of rights he develops.

In a few glorious pages (30–51), he tries to answer the question of why some ways in which people treat each other should never be allowed. He adopts a position of moral absolutism. He rejects the principle of utility, according to which any action is allowed provided the outcome yields a greater amount of good than would have existed without the action. This principle countenances all sorts of violations of rights, and therefore converts persons into means for each other's ends. He also seems to reject the related doctrine of the lesser evil, whereby the rights of some are violated "in order to lessen their total violation in the society." He says he will avoid the hardest test of moral absolutism: whether rights may be violated "to avoid catastrophic moral horror." But no moral science could possibly cover such cases; in them people do what they do, and are damned no matter what they do. We cannot censure Nozick for his reticence.

Why is he an absolutist? His answer is not the Christian teaching of self-giving love and not returning evil for evil. It is, rather, a beautifully worked restatement of the humanist position. Every person is an end in himself. "Individuals are inviolable." "To use a person . . . does not sufficiently respect and take account of the fact that he is a separate person, that his is the only life he has." ". . . distinct persons are not resources for others." ". . . there are distinct individuals each with his *own* life to lead . . . each with his own life to *lead*." "Rationality, free will, and moral agency" are main characteristics of a person, "by virtue of which others are constrained in their treatment of him." They are also themselves valuable characteristics. Nozick adds one additional feature to these traditionally invoked qualities: ". . . the ability to regulate and guide its life in accordance with some overall conception it chooses to accept." And, finally, what is the importance of that? "I conjecture that the answer is connected with that elusive and difficult notion: the meaning of life. A person's shaping his life in accordance with some overall plan is his way of giving meaning to his life; only a being with the capacity to so shape his life can have or strive for meaningful life."

To advance his argument, Nozick explores with true inventiveness the moral meaning of human differences from animals and from imaginary beings superior to human beings. He solidifies his conception of the person by also giving a number of reasons why we would not choose to plug into "the experience machine." We would not want induced simulation of experience, sensations without involvement in experience. "Perhaps what we desire is to live (an active verb) ourselves, in contact with reality. (And this, machines cannot do *for* us.)"

As I understand it, Nozick's general conclusion is that only when the rights of persons are respected absolutely are persons respected absolutely. Only when the rights of persons are respected absolutely can persons freely search for, and perhaps find, meaning in and for their lives, and thus be recognized in their distinct individuation. I think Nozick is saying that persons as persons *deserve* respect; and that such respect, when embodied in practice, is the *necessary institutional condition* for a society of persons engaged in the individual and collective pursuit of meaning.

Nozick calls this conception of the person Kantian, but it can also be seen as continuing the liberal humanist tradition of Mill, Green, Hobhouse, Tawney, Dewey, and Rawls. We could reasonably expect that on the basis of this conception a generous political theory might be built. In our circumstances, concern for persons must lead, I believe, to a doctrine of limited government. The state is now, whatever it has been at other periods in the last century, the greatest enemy to individual integrity. (It is also, of course, a friend, of sorts.) Nozick believes in limited government (the "minimal state"), and does so because of

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his commitment to respect for persons. There is, however, a terrible distortion that destroys the book's usefulness in the cause of newly defending the idea of limited government. Instead of assuming that many kinds of rights must be recognized, and many social conditions must exist if we are to favor the life of meaning for persons, Nozick narrows his theory of rights to the right of property, and he unfortunately makes that right his true absolute. His view is that when the right of property (almost unqualified) is respected, persons are respected, and persons are enabled to search for meaning in and for their lives. He is not simply suggesting what I think is right, that some private property may be psychologically and politically necessary for the free and secure development of individuality. Nor is he simply saying that we are entitled to a decent return on our labor. He goes infinitely beyond these points, and in the process betrays his own conception of the person.

I do not see that he has derived or could derive an almost unqualified right of property from his conception. There is only a *circumstantial* connection between being a person in Nozick's sense and having such a right. Maybe Jacksonian America realized this connection (for whites). But when and where else? Is it not right to say that in *most* circumstances an almost unqualified right of property will lead—even without deliberate wrongdoing—to the degradation of large numbers of people? Their right to property would be intact, but they would have little or no property. They would barely be persons. Is the England of Shaftesbury and Engels and Marx a fantasy? What permits Nozick to accept a society in which only a few or some would benefit from the protection of an almost unqualified right of property? Certainly his conception of each of us as a person does not.

What permits him is, precisely, that he constructs his theory independently of the conception. He *forgets* his conception. He proceeds with little reference to the reasons for which we have rights. He also makes almost no reference to what these rights are, the comparative importance of various rights, and what to do when, in order to have a society of persons, various rights must qualify each other. Nozick is more generous toward the right

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of property than constitutional libertarians are toward the right of speech. Though he believes that property may be acquired unjustly, he does not believe it is generally used harmfully. He is impatient with the idea that property is power. He comes close to taking it for granted that holding property is a right, the fundamental right. The greatest defense I can detect is an intimation. Whenever *any* amount of an individual's property is used without his consent for any end but protection, his freedom is mortally damaged and his wealth is stolen. Man's freedom is to keep his wealth for himself and use it as he pleases.

The oddity is that Nozick is emphatic in refusing the theory that could conceivably locate the source of the right of property in the person. I refer to Locke's view of property as an extension of the person and therefore as worthy of protection as any other aspect of the person—like his life, his innocent free activity, his religion. Locke taught that anything a person has taken from raw nature and made useful by "the labor of his body and the work of his hands" becomes that person's property because it has become that person. Nozick finds serious flaws in the notion and rejects it in favor of the common view that one's property is anything one has acquired, earned, found, won, or inherited, provided there has been no force or fraud. The shock is that Nozick extends *absolute* protection to property even when its acquisition does not come from the person's exertions.

He labors brilliantly and without exhaustion to defend property against those who would regulate or abolish it. In the absence of a thorough rationale for the right of property, his labor must appear unmotivated. But it is prodigious. The great threat he sees is the effort to redistribute property through the coercive activity of the state. Seeking to discredit the effort, he undertakes to discredit the state. His question is not: How can we be free persons and still subject ourselves to political authority? but: If any political power is compatible with an almost unqualified right of property, how extensive can it be? His answer is that only the minimal state, the night watchman state, is compatible. It is therefore the only morally acceptable state. Any other state grossly offends morality by assaulting (a one-value) moral absolutism. Those whom Nozick wants to satisfy are not philosophers of humanist individualism but property-minded anarchists and libertarians. He starts where they do, but manages to arrive at a state—though regretfully.

His procedure is to imagine the state away and see whether individuals, given a fresh start, would refound it; and if they did, how much of a state it would be. (I cannot use the phrase "form of government" to characterize the object of their quest, because Nozick is scarcely attentive to the practical and, more important, the intrinsic moral dissimilarities among forms of government.) He presents one more story of the state of nature to go with the others which political theorists have told from the time of Hobbes. I know of no state of nature more curious than Nozick's. The creatures he puts in it are thoroughly *his* creatures: they do not bear the burden of a basic, stripped-down human nature. They are unlike most people to the point of bizarre eccentricity. There is nothing natural about them; they are only lopsidedly social. They reason like Nozick, and that means they reason in accordance with his one-value absolutism. They act within his code and are bounded by his horizon. They claim all that their—his—code does not deny them. The state of nature is a meeting of highly intelligent American economists. They sit down and play a mental game whose moves are extraordinarily sophisticated, but whose initiating idea is to get rid of the swollen state by force of unanswerable argument. The state for them—for him—is not an open question.

The task is to placate anarchists and libertarians who are property-minded, as I have said. This can be done, Nozick thinks, only if he is able to go from no state to a state while not violating anyone's right to property. He assumes that there can be property when individuals live an anarchic life; he does not assume that property is the creation of the law. But one can speak of a natural right to property and still reject his unrealistic premise that property can exist in an unorganized condition of life lacking in fixed and detailed conventions. Nozick allows that there will be enough uncertainty about "boundaries" and intentions or impulses for numbers of people to create or accept protective agencies. No

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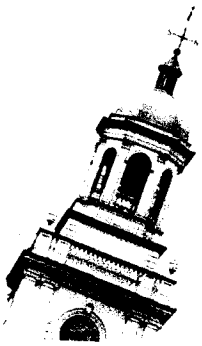

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definite immorality is required to begin the course that leads to the state. Rational people will freely pay for the costs of their own protection. Nozick's root idea is that the only justification for parting with any portion of one's substance is to preserve the rest.

Logically, a protective agency will grow into a de facto monopoly; it will command the strength to deter the unaffiliated from enforcing their own rights. The moral reason for this monopolistic behavior is that the clients of the agency cannot trust to the fair enforcement by others of their own rightful claims. To be completely moral, the de facto monopoly must protect those who would rather remain unaffiliated, but not charge them. After all, it is not certain that the would-be unaffiliated would have ever unfairly enforced a claim; they must be compensated for giving up their natural right to protect themselves. The willing clients of the monopoly cannot complain about paying for the protection of others when they deprive these possibly innocent creatures of their right to self-protection. There must be compensation. (Nozick is a great believer in compensation. He often sounds as if he thought money could compensate for the loss of anything in life, but that nothing but protection of money could compensate for the loss of money.) When the monopoly protects everyone's property within its territory, it turns into a state. When it functions only to protect the right of property, it is the minimal state. Thus without violating the right of property, and quite by an "invisible-hand" process, the moral state emerges. The complaints of property-minded anarchists and libertarians are allayed.

So, what is the argument? It would be too risky for property if there were no state to protect it. The argument then goes forward to life under a state. Nozick tries to make peace with the property-minded extremists. He passes from the reluctant defense of what is, in any case, unremovable (the state) to an attack on what is very variable: the state's activity. Even if he had wanted to, Nozick could not have persuaded us to abolish the state. But he can influence people in regard to policies. He is determined to do just that. It is painful to find so much brilliance in bondage to a heartless purpose. Heartless or not, the idea cannot stand. It may have influence, but it cannot stand. It is vitiated by an error in its suppositions.

The great enemy to the right of property is redistribution and the use of the state to effect redistribution. Nozick argues as if the modern state were swollen because of its redistributive endeavors. To be sure, he does allow that the rich and the middle classes share in the improper attempt to make the state work for their benefit at the expense of each other and the rest. When he sounds this theme, he is most genuinely antistate. But that is not his dominant theme. The major charge is that the modern state makes a system of injustice by trying to promote the economic welfare of the less well off. The injustice consists in taking wealth from some to give it to others, and in doing so by means of its coercive monopoly. It makes a system of violating the right of property. That is why the modern state is immoral and why the minimal state alone is good. He says, "Taxation of earnings from labor is on a par with forced labor." The modern state enslaves or exploits everybody who is not on welfare. He only mentions in passing the unjust attempts of the rich and the middle classes. The main victims of his reasoning are the living victims of social life. But one has only to consult a critical work like Michael Parenti's *Democracy for the Few* (1974) to see how much tax money goes to supporting business in the form of subsidies, allowances, and exemptions, and how little to ending poverty. Then there is the unimaginably large sum spent on armaments. The swollen state is the state of the corporate empire. Anyone sympathetic to anarchism (not to mention constitutionalism) would start there in his lamentation, not with the paltry superflux shaken at the lowly.

Perhaps worse than this omission is Nozick's strangely disproportionate emphasis on the subject of economic equality. He devotes many pages—and they are undeniably strong and effective pages—to trying to show that the moral foundations for economic equality are shaky. Shaky also are the foundations of Rawlsian limitations on inequality: the view that the only morally tenable inequality is one which, if removed, would worsen the condition of the worst off. Nozick throws one argument after another at equality. Let him

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Letter-Writing is, to me, the most agreable Amusement: and Writing to you the most entertaining and Agreable of all Letter-Writing. —John to Abigail. 12 April, 1764.

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win his fight, if he has to. The passion behind liberal and leftist economic policies has not been to equalize income, but to remedy or alleviate or prevent the poverty, the misery of millions of people. The discourse on the rightness of inequality is almost beside the point.

What, then, has Nozick to say against relieving misery? He does not say that relief is bad because it tends to increase the scope of governmental activity, and the more the government does the less freedom there is. He does make something of the practical inefficiencies of various programs. His central contention, however, is that no one is obliged to relieve the suffering of another, despite the fact that one could do so without serious loss to oneself. When I speak of the error which vitiates Nozick's antiredistribution argument, it is this assertion I have in mind.

The issue here is at once simple and complex. We are obliged to respond to suffering. Let that assertion stand. It would be a mistake to believe that the assertion had to be backed up with reasons, that it needed philosophical justification. Or, to say it more modestly, if any assertion can go unjustified, this one can. Nozick holds, in contrast, that we are obliged only to avoid doing harm to others, violating their rights; in particular, we must avoid physical transgression of the boundary of another person and his property. Not even Bentham, a main source of thinking about moral problems with economic metaphors, delimited responsibility as narrowly as Nozick. To avoid doing harm to another by direct attack on his person and goods, and to compensate him for harm done, is surely an important component of right conduct; it may even be the most important. It is, however, only one component. The duty to prevent or alleviate or remedy the misery of others is also part of our duty, our strictest duty. We may be compelled to it. There is no suggestion or implication in Nozick's own conception of the person that could have led him away from this sense of duty. Only his obsession with property could account for this awful truncation.

Of course complexities are there to bedevil the simple assertion. Every sort of suffering? Every degree of suffering? Everybody's that you see? What fraction of your income do you owe? What choice are you allowed in the direction of your duty? There are many more complexities. Our responsibility cannot be indefinitely large. George Eliot best expresses the iron necessity for narrow limits: "If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel's heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence." I take it to be true, for all that, that our minimal duty is more extensive than Nozick says, and that if we are not prepared freely to discharge it, the state is entitled to compel us. It can tax us, by democratic procedure, for relief. Some acts of goodness are wanted only if they are freely done, but the relief of misery comes as it can. We do not have to feel compassion. We do not have to have fellow feeling toward neighbors, citizens, and outsiders. We do not have to acknowledge that we are not self-made but rather the beneficiaries of thousands of nameless, unrequited acts done by our predecessors and contemporaries. We do not have to feel humbly that luck, good and bad, plays such a pervasive role in the lives of winners and losers alike. Nozick tries to refute, or simply dismiss, all these sentiments that may incline us toward our duty. He is resourceful and instructive. Nevertheless he has gravely erred in his definition of duty; that he is resourceful and instructive is of no avail. He has failed to see that even an almost unqualified right of property is not violated when wealth is taxed to sustain the needy.

There is a historically connected issue: the right of the state to regulate property and impose taxes for the sake of control, efficiency, growth, greater prosperity, an altered pattern of income, new relations of power, to extend the empire, or whatever. If people in a society believe that there is such a right as the right to property, the morality of their regulation and taxation for these aims raises interesting and serious questions. The old doctrine of substantive due process fashioned by the Supreme Court in the nineteenth century to defend property against the state's reasons is hardly contemptible. Social pragmatism tends to slide over rights which the pragmatists themselves, in calmer moods, profess adherence to. The liberty "to do what one wills with one's own" is no small liberty. Still, I find it impossible to conceive of us as having

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nerve endings in every dollar of our estate. A person's holdings and level of income are so bound up with the changeable and culturally contingent rules and arrangements of the system of property, with the channels and opportunities for activity *created* by state action or permission, that it should be strange to look on all one's dollars as exactly and entirely one's own. To part with some money that is used to fund a program we do not like is not to suffer an impairment in the same way that we do when we are deprived of the ability to hear an unorthodox thought uttered, or when even one of us is deprived of his legal rights. All these considerations, though, disputed as they may be, do not affect the matter of relieving misery. The state cannot make some miserable in order to stop the misery of others, but it can strive to abolish misery for some at a nonruinous cost to others. And all this regardless of who, if anyone—those who run things or those who suffer—can be blamed for the misery.

Out of fairness to Nozick I must mention that he presents two ideas that look like mitigations of his position on property and misery. The first is the principle of rectification; the second is the so-called Lockean proviso. Under the first principle, people who enjoy property or wealth derived in some way from the dispossession or stolen labor of those living or dead owe the victims or their heirs a sufficient compensation to rectify the wrong. Nozick does not pretend to work out this idea, though I assume that the American victims he has in mind are blacks and Indians. It would be wonderful and shocking if Nozick did work out the idea: he may take more money from whites than the welfare state ever has. Omitted from consideration, however, are the millions here (and abroad?) who desperately need aid, but who could not be covered, or covered easily, by the principle of rectification.

Under the second principle, taken from John Locke, appropriation or acquisition of property is unjust if it leaves others worse off. I am not certain about Nozick's meaning, but I think the proviso applies primarily to cases where someone "appropriates the total supply of something necessary for life." Nozick refers to Hastings Rashdall's example of a person who comes upon the only supply of water in a desert (ahead of the rest of his group) and "appropriates it all." Nozick pronounces the deed unjust. For all other cases, the Lockean proviso turns out to be a dead letter. Nozick says, "I believe that the free operation of a market system will not actually run afoul of the Lockean proviso." I think that he believes the same of a mixed economy like our own.

Nozick's two concessions thus do not carry much weight in the book, which works with all its force in the direction of ignoring misery.

I want to believe, and do believe, that the book could have sent its force in a better direction. To repeat: Nozick's conception of the person is mangled by an almost absolute right of property; yet not even respect for this hypothetical right would require or permit the state to turn away from suffering.

No, he is not the new Tom Paine we need. The theory of limited government awaits a philosopher as superb as Nozick (where found?), but it cannot use Nozick himself. The truth is that his principles would not even exclude a vast state apparatus if it was required to repress a numerous discontented mass that felt itself neglected or exploited. This minimal state would be minimal only in the job it tried to do, not in the powers it exercised to do its job. The night watchman state can be a police state. Property would not be regulated, and the state would not be used to redistribute. Think of banana republics, some colonial regimes, a caricatured South Africa. Nozick's principles of justice do not condemn such systems; would his sentiments?

There are many more issues that Nozick raises and I would like to discuss. But no matter how long one goes on talking about the book, one could not feel satisfied that one had completely reckoned with it or taken from it all it has to give. I wish to say only one more thing. After the arguments are had, the book will go on haunting the reader. It is not that the importance of the arguments dissolves, or anxieties concerning the book's influence vanish. The book is too strong for that to happen. Rather, apart from its present-day use or misuse, and in addition to its power to provoke and instruct, the book is valuable as a display of sensibility. From beginning to

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end, between the lines, in the lines, in asides, in style, in cases and examples, in the reach of its learning as well as its imagination and fantasy, the book displays the sensibility of a new world—a world to come, perhaps. It is the world of near-catastrophe, catastrophe, post-catastrophe; a world in which people have to start again or adapt wildly; not an anarchic but a nihilist world. It is society as a state of nature—only, a most artificial nature.

The elements of such a world are desperate calculations, terrible estrangement, an anomic learned ignorance, weird sensory possibilities, mighty private competencies for action and for making and unmaking human relations and arrangements, a sense that the earth is not our only place. It is a world all fluid, without traditions or sponsorship. Everything is permitted that can be paid for. A person is so free he is legally allowed and morally entitled to sell himself into slavery. In the last part of the book, Nozick concentrates this sensibility into a description of such a world and calls it Utopia. Utopia's other name is the minimal state. He says that the perfect society is one made up of many freely joined smaller societies in which face-to-face groups live their common life exactly as they please, and hold each other to it. The *telos* of the minimal state is the tribal society! Nozick's mind is at home in this world. It is a brave mind.

A Stone into the Mirror

EDITH WHARTON. A Biography. *By R. W. B. Lewis. Harper & Row. $15.*

Reviewed by LEON EDEL

It is a curious experience to read the biography of a woman I knew long ago, knew as a physical presence and a conversational force, and to learn in detail about what I long suspected, the pivotal love affair in her life—having known the lover, a man of sentimental charm, an Edwardian fashion plate, and even seen him during the war in his bedraggled old age. I can recover totally the serene and elderly Edith Wharton, presiding at lunch in the sun-filled dining room at the Pavillon Colombe in 1935, the linen, the silver, the china, the servants, and Edith in a yellow dress, the perfect facade of her expensive security, yet breaking through constantly with her keen spirit of social and intellectual "fun." Her voice was thin and old, but her eye remained sure and clear; her laughter was worldly. Her official biography, written at last, reveals, as it should, the loose threads in the tapestry—indeed it uncovers a deep well of anguish and depression that Edith had survived in her elegant aging. Remembering the polished surface of the woman behind the whitewashed garden walls at Saint Brice-sous-Forêt, I repeat to myself, "How little we know—how little a biographer can *ever* know—about the lives of others, the life of his subject!"

And yet . . . ! Mrs. Wharton, by accident or by design (who can tell?), left behind certain unpublished pages (they couldn't have been published in her day) which I can only describe as vintage "porno": that is, porno bottled like a fine wine that R. W. B. Lewis now invites us, in the appendix to his book, to taste. In these pages, shunted into the back of the book, Edith Wharton shatters the "society" image created by American criticism of a novelist who wrote in ladylike fashion about the adulteries and divorces of the rich. She throws a smashing stone into the mirror, and breaks into pieces the befurred, diamonded, "cold," and cold-shouldering woman who was supposed only to be majestic and high-toned and engaged in an artistic slumming expedition. In these posthumous one thousand words, set down probably in consonance with the era of Molly Bloom or Lady Chatterley, Mrs. Wharton writes of a father and daughter erotically embraced on a black bearskin rug (as in one of Thomas Mann's incest tales). The prose in this fragment is perhaps a little too close to that of women's magazines of the 1920s, but it has finesse, the womanly point of view, and a general *orgasmia* that might offer lessons to an Erica Jong. The Edith Wharton of the critics is wiped out at one stroke. She seems to be saying, "Yes, we copulate in my world, even within our patterns; there are many kinds of ghettos, and I have suffered in escaping from

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LEON EDEL, biographer of Henry James and editor of his letters, is also editor of the Edmund Wilson papers. He is Citizens Professor of English at the University of Hawaii.

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mine quite like a poor girl rising out of the slums. Emotional starvation can kill quite as much as any other kind of starvation."

R. W. B. Lewis is a seasoned critic, and this is his first biography. Critics usually—Mark Schorer in his *Sinclair Lewis,* John Unterecker in his *Voyages: A Life of Hart Crane,* to name two—have difficulty shifting into this alien and demanding form. Professor Lewis shows the signs of his struggle, but I think the public will like his well-told story; and it is to his credit that he has tried to shape and "craft" his abundant materials instead of pouring the cornucopia into his reader's lap. To be sure, even a scrupulous biographer, handed Edith Wharton's fascinating love diary and her papers (by her orders they were locked away at Yale for twenty years after her death), could hardly fail—her voice is so dominant and articulate, and she speaks so eloquently out of the surrounding text. Lewis has avoided, in the first part of his biography, the fatal pitfall of "chronology," although he later falls victim to it. He has shown a certain *souplesse d'esprit* in coming to grips with his high-spirited subject; but he has too rigorously, and often mechanically, given us an excess of background—a small *Who's Who* of Mrs. Wharton's world—biographing her acolytes and friends without characterizing them. The Bourgets, so powerful in Edith Wharton's life, remain ghostly; even Walter Berry is not a rounded "character." The weakness of this biography, told with liveliness but in a cultivated narrative that sometimes lacks incisiveness and color, resides in Professor Lewis's failure to analyze Edith's psychosomatic medical history, and the psychology of her decaying marriage. This said, we can enjoy his engrossing story of "riches-to-art"; it is quite as appealing as the old "rags-to-art." They are, after all, two facets of the same kind of American success story.

What is missing in this important life are the larger brush strokes—sure, decisive, as of a Sargent portrait—the "grand design" that a biographer must discover within the heaped-up papers of an archive. One could indeed begin where Lewis ends, with the incest story he tucks away in the appendix. Why did Mrs. Wharton write it and what did it mean? Not incest with brothers, not the "illicit" love (as they used to say) of her novels, but the embraces of a father and a daughter. This is a possible and credible key to Mrs. Wharton's life and personality; it underlines her work, her career, her struggle. Her relation to her father, fairly obviously, needs much deeper exploration, as does her hostility toward her mother and elder siblings; she was an only daughter, born much later than her brothers. If we follow this kind of analysis we could indeed ask why she was spoken of later as "a man's woman." The men in her life, looked at closely, embody facets of an unrealized father—cool, dry intellect and masculine "sanction" (Walter Berry), passion and erotic experience (W. Morton Fullerton), art, taste, discrimination, and the "foreign" exotic (Bernhard Berenson), managerial strength and power (Teddy Roosevelt). This is not to speak of the group of gifted homosexual friends (the Qu'Acre salon of Howard Sturgis), or the donnish Lapsley, the nuanced Percy Lubbock, the brilliant Geoffrey Scott. I remember spending a long afternoon (in 1936) at the Pavillon Colombe with Lapsley and Mrs. Wharton, and how they "sparked" one another (her word)—Edith exuberantly leaning on Lapsley with the affection and familiarity of many decades. She made him her literary executor.

We have long known, thanks to Louis Auchincloss and, earlier, Blake Nevius, that Edith Wharton's work reflects her compelling need to escape "Old New York" and its society, and Newport, and Boston; to pry open her "gilded cage" and make herself an artist. What is documented for us in full now is the even more important prison of Mrs. Wharton's marriage. And the grand design of Edith Wharton's life must include the way in which she gradually extricated herself from frustration, rage, and the blocked sexuality of her union with the easygoing Boston socialite Teddy Wharton. She had a breakdown and fought her way out of it by writing her frustrations into fiction: her art became the expression of her inward life. Edith and Teddy short-circuited one another sexually, socially, intellectually, and made each other ill. At first they sought relief by movement—shuttling to and from Europe, decorating houses, the legendary motoring memorialized by Henry James. In the ascendancy of Edith and

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the decline of her husband, in their mutual destructiveness, it was almost as if they were living a *Tender Is the Night* before that novel was written. Edith survived by converting the stuff of experience—including her emotional helplessness—into the stuff of art. For Teddy, who had neither her inner strength nor her articulateness, there could only be decline and breakdown. This is the "line" of Edith Wharton's story, and it is as powerful as Fitzgerald's novel.

Her love for the New England-born journalist W. Morton Fullerton, who was cosmopolitan, Gallic, a quoter of verse and of fine sentiment, had all the intensity of a middle-aged woman whose passion, given its opening, burst its walls. Morton was clearly the right man, just weak willed enough, intelligent enough, and relaxed enough in the ways of love and sex to provide Edith at last with a sense of a *grand amour* and of her own power, quite in the style of George Sand. Fulfilled at last, she might have—as some children of art do—rested on her laurels. But there was enough of the artist in Mrs. Wharton to make her persevere. Indeed she had a compelling need to write, every day of her life. As early as her fifteenth year, Edith wrote her first little novel and then wrote a brilliant series of reviews of it for herself, mocking all the current book reviewers. (She once said to me, "I can't read the critics of my books: they have a set series of phrases and categories. I don't feel at home in them.") Her early struggle gave us *The House of Mirth;* her affair with Fullerton gave us *The Reef;* her social caricature gave us *The Custom of the Country;* her tragic sense gave us the contrived yet remarkable *Ethan Frome*. When we read Lewis's ordered documentation we recognize that Edith Wharton liberated herself in her work, but did not transcend the patterns of her society.

At last she can take her place in American fiction as a novelist infinitely more endowed than Sinclair Lewis, whom she admired, or the unfinished Fitzgerald, or even the obsolete if charming Howells. Much narrower than James or some of her successors, like Faulkner, she was infinitely richer than her simplified contemporary Willa Cather, infinitely more at ease with her world than a host of popular novelists of her time. She often lapsed into what we could call soap opera in her later years (and earned vast royalties from it), but her style remained—those elegant periodic sentences in which she apostrophized her world. And she was steeped in civilization, as few American writers have been. This makes her precious to us—all the more in a time of regression.

Language Unlimited

AFTER BABEL. Aspects of Language and Translation. *By George Steiner. Oxford University Press. $17.50.*

Reviewed by ROBERT M. ADAMS

George Steiner, who was an extraordinary fellow long before Churchill College formally bestowed that splendid title on him, has written, under the title *After Babel,* an expansive book about translation, taking this topic in a very elastic sense indeed. For Steiner's purposes, any act of communication involves translation. When my neighbor's dog barks in the night (as he is now doing), I promptly translate the message: "Prowlers in the neighborhood," or else "A prairie dog got under the fence," or "Jo-Jo has a bellyache"—depending on the tone, the inflection, and my awareness of circumstances. Anything between that humble episode and Hölderlin's rendering of Sophocles is translation within the limits of Steiner's usage. He is therefore immediately involved in the entire topic of linguistics and communications theory. In addition, he takes into his purview all varieties of imitation, however close or remote; also variants, versions, and parodies (to the point of being ready to consider Joyce's *Ulysses* a translation of the *Odyssey*); recurrent themes and common topics of literature; and musical settings of literary works.

In fact, though the present book covers a great deal, there's no logical reason why it should not be extended even further. When a novel is turned into a movie, that's trans-

ROBERT M. ADAMS, professor of English at UCLA, is currently working under a Guggenheim grant on a book about the novel after Joyce. He is the author of, most recently, *The Roman Stamp* and is preparing a new translation of *The Prince*.

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lation in Steiner's terms. When a painting or a piece of sculpture deals with a theme, mythological or religious, which has found previous expression, that's translation too. Book illustrations are really parallel books in another tongue. When the Supreme Court building imitates the Maison Carrée, or Westminster Hall imitates a Gothic cathedral, that is undoubtedly translation as well, without a word spoken. Verbal or aesthetic conceptions can be translated into the language of mathematics; there is a language of gestures into and out of which we translate freely. One may be thankful that Steiner did not pursue the logic of a loose definition to its bitter end, while still noting that, to prevent his book from dealing with everything in the cosmos and a little bit extra, he had to set arbitrary limits to his subject. The boundary line remains permanently odd. Why is the musical setting of a poem "translation" within the scope of the book, while movies based on literary originals are not so much as mentioned?

Still, taking the topic as defined, no sensible reader can complain of a shortage of things to think about. Modern linguistic theory is a jungle into which not only linguists but philosophers, literary critics, social psychiatrists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and men of every conceivable discipline have crowded, in search of big answers to big questions. Approaching the study of language with different basic problems in mind, they have naturally emphasized different aspects of a field that was inconceivably large and various to start with. From the intricacies of neurophysiology to those of games theory, from the implications of entropy to Hopi, high-energy physics, and Jorge Luis Borges, there is hardly an area of modern intellectual life that can't be brought into a discussion of language. Into this post-Babel Babel, Steiner plunges with buoyant assurance. He summarizes, adjudicates, paraphrases, and leaps across the centuries, collapsing into one phrase long and complex strains of development and intricate relationships. I am myself no linguist, and must leave to experts in that trade a final judgment of Steiner's heroic effort to summarize the state of their discipline in the first 235 pages (chaps. 1–3) of *After Babel*. But apart from its accuracy or inaccuracy, two or three things about Steiner's outsize prolegomenon to a discussion of translation struck me as linguistic phenomena in their own right.

The writing is highly inflated. Some people would think it pretentious, but that's not quite the right word; it seems more in the nature of private high-talk. The prose is polysyllabic far beyond necessity, allusive rather than explanatory, and often reads gnomically, like a man writing shorthand notes to himself. It is not, however, either devious or opaque prose; on the contrary, it can be seen through and followed with only occasional impatience at what seem to be adventitious and gratuitous difficulties. And it is in no sense dogmatic or magisterial. Steiner may have ambitions to be a lofty author, but when he rises to the top of speculation, he does so chiefly in an interrogative mood. He likes to ask a string of questions, often of a wide-eyed and obviously unanswerable nature (in one sequence of three paragraphs, I found twenty-five interrogations and just fifteen brief declarative sentences); and he is perfectly sensible about not trying to answer them or even saying outright that they are unanswerable. The best thing in his first three chapters struck me as being, not a fine-spun point at all, but a shrewd and well-conceived move to widen a basic premise of our discourse on language. Much of this discourse has gone forward on the tacit assumption that language is a way of describing or denoting reality, but Steiner sensibly and practically points out that a lot of language creates its own reality in the form of lies or fantasies. Apart from these special cases, language also denotes future states, optional moods, conditionals, and expresses potentiality or desire. (There should be a special place in here, a reviewer may add, for negation, denial, naysaying, which Kenneth Burke would make one of man's special talents.) We do not have a really comprehensive linguistic theory till we have included these varieties of usage.

Now, this is a note of plain common sense, and on such a note Steiner often concludes a series of speculative extrapolations from his basic theme of communication. As a matter of fact, this whole preliminary discussion of linguistic theory culminates, somewhat

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lamely, in an argument that we neither have nor can have a solidly based and thoroughly worked-out theory of translation because we do not have and cannot have a solidly based and thoroughly worked-out theory of language in general. Thus, translation is perforce a pragmatic process involving different elements in the original, different responses in translator and reader, and more variables than can be contained in any schema. At this point the reader may well ask why it should have taken two hundred-plus pages to work through a set of linguistic theories which we now learn are practically useless—a detour that could have been obviated simply by taking the word *translation* in its normal, everyday acceptation. Still, it has been an instructive journey, if a strictly unnecessary one, and the first chapters offer many pointers for further reading and thought.

Chapter 4, on theoretical ideas about translation, is frankly a skimble-skamble piece of work. It divides the topic peremptorily into four historical periods. The first stretches from 46 B.C. to 1804 or 1813, concluding with the work of Hölderlin or Schleiermacher—one or the other, depending on whether you are reading page 237 or 238. Absolutely nothing is said as to why the work of either man should be seen as culminating (or breaking with) nearly two millennia of development. The second period runs from 1804 or 1813 to 1946; the modern current runs quickly from 1946 to 1960; and after that there's something else. The carelessness and grotesque imbalance of these "periods," their blurring of elementary perspective, extends throughout the chapter. On page 237 we have a list of those who have "made the most telling reports on the activity of the translator." It includes Goethe, Schopenhauer, Matthew Arnold, I. A. Richards, Croce, and Ortega y Gasset, none of whom appear in a list (page 269) of those who "have said something fundamental or new about translation." Of those who *are* on the later list, about one third are names and nothing else; Steiner does not bother to mention what they said that was fundamental or new. This is plainly sloppy work, and chapter 4 is the low point of the book.

Chapter 5 is devoted to a discussion of some actual interlingual translations, and here Steiner does the usual work of comparing original with version, or one version of the same original with another, and does it well. Very finely suggested is the notion that not only may a translator contribute to an understanding of his original, but that there is a mutual generative intensity in the relationship, leading in rare but wonderful cases to a heightened sense of a possible language behind both languages. On the other hand, Steiner seems to me much too uncritical, or at least insufficiently explanatory, of the kind of fractured-Latin translation that has sprung up in the wake of Pound's "Homage to Sextus Propertius." As a specific example, here is Celia and Louis Zukofsky's translation of Catullus No. 58:

> *Caeli, Lesbia nostra, Lesbia illa*
> *illa Lesbia, quam Catullus unam*
> *plus quam se atque suos amavit omnes,*
> *nunc in quadriviis et angiportis*
> *glubit magnanimi Remi nepotes.*

Caelius, Lesbia new star, Lesbia a light,
all light, Lesbia, whom Catullus (o name
loss) whom his eyes caught as avid of none,
none else—slunk in the driveways, the dingy parts
glut magnanimous Remus, his knee-high pots.

The translators, says Steiner, "are, at one level, spinning off puerile acrostics, but they are, at another, abusing their source with strategic intent. They are trying to instance possible procedures for American poetry now and tomorrow and hinting, confusedly, at a theory of immediate universal understanding."

Now, this commentary seems to me truly pretentious gibberish. One no more arrives at a "theory of immediate universal understanding" (which seems to imply understanding a foreign tongue without knowing it) by translating "nepotes" into "knee-high pots," than by following the schoolboy in translating Caesar's title "The Calico Belly." What is this proposed "procedure for American poetry now and tomorrow"? Our poets are to write in a foreign language and then pun off it into English puerilities? Really, if Steiner is going to take this procedure seriously, he owes it a serious explanation.

The examples of translation, good and bad, which make up the bulk of chapter 5 may seem a little special, but I think this is all to

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the good. The *loci communes* of the topic have been worn threadbare, and it is pleasant to learn of Borchardt's *Dante Deutsch* and Paul Celan's translations of Shakespeare's sonnets. These detailed discussions of the gains and losses involved in specific versions are more illuminating than any quantity of abstract theory, and one's only complaint is that Steiner's handling of them is sometimes a bit perfunctory. He is, for example, always interesting on the subject of translations into German, but says little of nothing about translations *out of* German—which, with interesting exceptions, are generally as unsuccessful as the first group are successful. Why this should be so may be one more unanswerable question, but someone with Steiner's quadrilingual background might well have given it a glance, as a way of balancing his emphasis on the opposite process.

Chapter 6 is devoted to musical settings of literary works and the general subject of recurrent themes, motifs, *topoi;* both are topics too vast to be huddled into a short chapter at the end of a big book already overextended in its efforts to deal with two enormous themes. The afterword is a brief survey of the current status of English.

In Steiner's book, most of the faults, on which I have perhaps dwelt excessively, seem to me the result of a romantic temperament. Fate made him a polyglot, and he's tried to make himself a polymath; but a Doctor Faustus he's not. In the first chapter he describes very revealingly a long list of the wonderful books one has to study in order to understand properly a text out of a past culture. The list is worthy of Robert Burton or Sir Thomas Browne; it is curious lore poured forth for its own sake. Far be it from me to say a word in praise of ignorance, but a lot of this erudition is for show and not for blow. It is perfectly possible to clutter up a passage of Shakespeare, say, with so many Italian analogues and Latin etymologies, so many obsolete and buried overtones, so much of what "the age" (that is, any random writer you happen to have scratched up) is supposed to have thought, that the dramatic passage disappears under a clutter of antiquarian underbrush. Instead of straining at scruples and piling on conceits, we sometimes get more by listening for the voice of true passion.

In one of the epigraphs to Steiner's book, Borges speaks with his own dry wit of letters and their "modest mystery." It is true; the mysteries of language, in addition to being as profound as the cabala and as dark as outer space, are in all sorts of immediate ways modest and manageable. We must ask limited and carefully defined questions about language. We must not expect language to do too many things at once. We must, as readers, bend our minds to give the language we are reading the benefit of a supple and sympathetic interpretation. But then it works very well, even in spite of obstacles. The reader who approaches *After Babel* in this spirit will find it thought-provoking and widely informative—despite the fact that in some passages the author has taken, it seems to me, more pains to be portentous than to be plain.

Stories in Stone

RELIEF SCULPTURE. *By L. R. Rogers. Oxford University Press. $19.50.*

Reviewed by JAMES TRILLING

Recent years have seen striking new developments in the field of popular art history. In America and England there has been a sense that museums have a responsibility not only to display works of art but actively to educate the public, primarily by relating the works displayed to the social and cultural life of the epochs that produced them. This new spirit of pedagogy is of course not confined to museums; the most famous and influential example is Kenneth Clark's film series *Civilisation.* Such an approach, which seeks to summarize the achievement of decades in a few words and images, has tremendous educational potential, but there are also great disadvantages, which paradoxically may be said to increase in proportion to the skill of the teacher. He is bound to impose his own conception upon the material, and the more successful he is in suggesting the "essential" qualities of a style or culture, the more likely it is that his interpretations will be taken as

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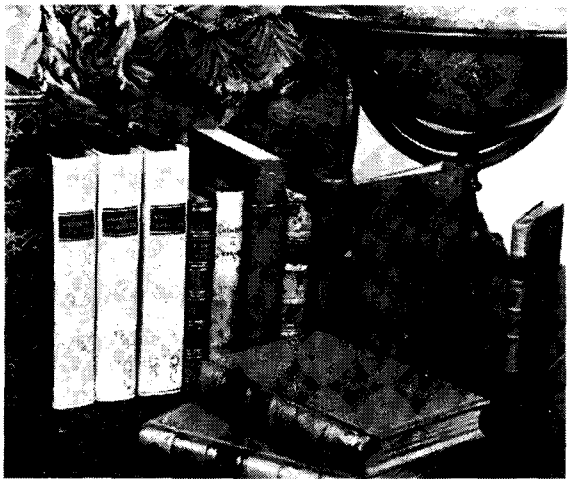

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facts, with a resulting loss of intellectual curiosity.

A less unified approach, but probably in the long run far more stimulating, was that adopted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in its 1970–71 exhibition, Masterpieces of Fifty Centuries. The rooms were arranged chronologically, from the beginning of recorded history to the present day, yet in such a way that works produced in the same period but in widely separated cultures were shown together. For example, Olmec jade carvings from Mexico, dating to 800 B.C. and earlier, were placed next to Chinese ritual bronzes contemporary with them. Such juxtapositions are by nature challenging as reminders of the too easily forgotten diversity of artistic effort. Moreover, within the framework of an accurate chronology they are important for the real and answerable questions they sometimes suggest about the effects of contact between one civilization and another: for instance, the Greco-Roman influence on early Indian sculpture. A further point in favor of the cross-cultural approach is that it encourages the study of specific art forms in terms of their origins, purposes, and criteria of excellence—not merely as they relate to a particular context, but as they occur throughout the world and throughout history.

It is to this approach that the Appreciation of the Arts Series owes its existence. Of the eight volumes published by Oxford University Press over the last seven or eight years, six deal with individual arts—painting, ceramics, architecture, et cetera—on a cross-cultural basis. The most recent of the books is *Relief Sculpture* by L. R. Rogers, head of the faculty of three-dimensional design at Loughborough College of Art and Design, who has already contributed a volume on sculpture to the same series. It is hard to know what to expect from such a book. Relief sculpture worldwide, from the Parthenon frieze to a medal by Pisanello, from a Mayan stele to a Romanesque baptismal font—do the similarities among such works sufficiently outweigh the differences to suggest valid defining characteristics? Traditional painting, drawing, and sculpture are defined in terms of technique, which is not possible with relief. This is because, as Rogers points out, it combines elements of both sculpture and drawing. Can it, then, be defined as a separate art form at all?

The relation of medium and technique to aesthetic purpose is a major concern of modern art theory. On the one hand, since the beginning of cubist collage there has been a movement to do away with hard-and-fast distinctions between the arts. On the other hand, contemporary painting and sculpture have, to a great extent, been motivated by the wish to establish a canon of styles and effects proper to each art. Can such a canon be established for relief sculpture? Rogers raises the question but does not attempt to answer it; yet he must justify his treatment of relief as a separate art if his book is to have value for the nonspecialist reader in search of a conceptual framework for his own observations. Such a framework, however, is not proposed. Nor is the book organized along historical lines, which would give it an equally important, if less glamorous, pedagogic purpose. It deals chiefly with the categories into which relief sculpture can be divided: high and low relief, ground line and ground plane, real and illusionistic (or, as Rogers calls it, "notional") space, drawing and modeling, to mention only some of them. These are valid and useful distinctions, because they provide a vocabulary for discussing specialized aspects of the genre, in particular those that have to do with the treatment of space. But Rogers seems to view descriptive classification as an end in itself. Considering the diversity of the material on which he draws, this is frustrating: there are almost as many categories as there are objects illustrated, and the reader looks in vain for some kind of synthesis.

The only discipline to which Rogers submits his material is that of the formal analysis of individual works. His description of a seventeenth-century relief, Algardi's *Meeting of Pope Leo I and Attila,* is typical: "The strong, forward-leaning lines of the Pope's body and upstretched arm, reinforced by the line of the cross, are connected with the arm of one apostle and the body of the other to suggest an invincible force which resists and dominates the confused forms of Attila and his army. . . ." This is, of course, an accepted way of writing about works of art, but in its context it creates problems. It could as

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easily describe a painting as a relief, and indeed Rogers speaks with disconcerting frequency of "a relief sculpture or other work of art." Then too, the methods of analysis employed by Rogers are valuable primarily for persons with no previous knowledge of the visual arts. But it is difficult to know how the beginner can respond to a sentence like this: "The space of Greek reliefs is sometimes said to be a finite and discontinuous space, as opposed to the infinite and continuous space of Renaissance perspective, or a 'haptic' space, which we know primarily through our 'tactile-muscular intuitions,' and which contrasts with the optical space which is mediated to us by vision alone." In speaking of ornament, Rogers feels no need to define such "descriptive" terms as anthemion, inhabited scroll, bead and reel. Anyone for whom these terms really are descriptive is in no need of the kind of formal analysis the book provides.

Relief sculpture is the "applied" art par excellence; with few exceptions it has no meaning apart from the surface of a building or smaller object. Yet Rogers's text and choice of photographs strangely avoid placing a relief in its setting. This is especially disturbing in the case of architectural reliefs, where the significance of the context is alluded to but not explored. The *Last Judgment* from a tympanum at Autun, for example, is reproduced once in its entirety and once in detail, but it is never shown in relation to the building.

An essential function of relief throughout history has been to serve as a vehicle of narrative, but Rogers barely touches on this point. Trajan's Column receives little more than passing mention, and no attempt is made to compare it with sculpture from the palace of Ashurbanipal, the only other monumental narrative relief that appears in the book.

Ostensibly committed to a cross-cultural approach, *Relief Sculpture* exemplifies it only in a superficial manner. Examples are taken from different cultures, apparently at random, without even a claim to providing a comprehensive survey. Most striking is the absence of any reference to relief sculpture in China, although the bronzes of the Archaic period and the tombs of the Han dynasty rank among the most impressive, albeit dis-

the classic
LITERARY IMAGES OF PERMANENCE AND CHANGE
BY FRANK KERMODE

Frank Kermode reopens the question "What is a classic?" (from T.S. Eliot's probing 1944 essay) and argues that the modern definition of the "classic" is nonetheless geared to some notion of timeless breadth and depth of meaning. "One is grateful for dozens of individual literary insights (the Hawthorne chapter alone is worth the price of the book)"—*Kirkus Reviews*. "His remarks cover a wide range of learning and convey profound literary insights."—*Publishers Weekly*
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similar, examples of the genre. One might also have expected mention of the splendid cast-bronze reliefs of the Benin culture of Nigeria. And the failure to cite, among individual works, the monumental reliefs of Persepolis is inexplicable.

If Rogers's work disappoints on almost every count, would another approach be more successful? One possibility would be to start by considering relief sculpture in terms of its functional rather than its formal characteristics—something this book would have been on its way to doing had it begun, rather than ended, with chapters on coins and medals, and on ornament. Seen in this way, relief is not an art, in the sense that painting and sculpture are arts, but a device for imposing one art, or one work of art, upon another. It has its origin in the instinct to combine, complicate, and transform. The principle is best illustrated by ornament, which imposes on an object a pattern and texture having no intrinsic connection with the shape and material of the object itself, as when a stone dome is covered with an elaborate floral tracery. The same could be said of ornamental painting, but there is a crucial difference. Relief changes not just the appearance, but the actual texture—perhaps even the shape—of the thing it adorns. That is to say, two works of art, entirely distinct and even contradictory, are treated as one, and the incongruity cherished and exploited. Once this convention is accepted, there is no qualitative difference between ornamental and representational relief, and even narrative scenes, with their full burden of human experience and emotion, may be incorporated into a decorative scheme.

A striking quality of representational relief is its suitability for conveying certain kinds of information. Coins are the simplest instance, for, as Rogers points out, their main importance has always been commemorative and propagandistic. The reliefs on coins—ruler portraits, deities, symbolic scenes—are intended to convey information of a specific sort. Not just representation, but information, is made an integral and literally tangible part of an unrelated object. The real significance of this lies in its implications for relief as narrative. Naturally, the major examples are to be found at the other end of the scale from coins, in monumental reliefs like those of the Egyptian tombs and Assyrian palaces, the Pergamon Altar and Roman triumphal columns, where, as with coins, subject matter dominates. In general, relief is more forceful than painting as a narrative device. It is more durable—this is important in a monumental context—and it allows not only the illusion, but a great part of the physical reality of a scene to be made aesthetically if not structurally one with the building or decorated object.

In the visual arts, as in literature, narrative is intimately connected with the movement of time, a fact that Rogers acknowledges without pursuing it. In the great narrative relief compositions, the fashion in which the artist orders the succession of events and the amount of information he imparts at any one moment are bound to affect his treatment of individual elements within the larger design. The study of narrative technique therefore furnishes a valuable key to the appreciation of relief.

A final point concerns the intermediate position of relief between sculpture and the pictorial arts. All representational painting demands our acceptance of certain conventions whereby a three-dimensional space is depicted on a flat surface. Within this convention, however, and subject to its variations, painting can be explicit with regard to extent of space, setting, and incidental detail—that is, the illusionistic space can theoretically be filled just as full as a real space would be. In exact contrast, freestanding sculpture is spatially literal in two senses: it exists naturally in three dimensions, and it makes no attempt to suggest any space beyond that which immediately encloses a figure or group. Bernini's *David* glares out of his own space toward an invisible Goliath, and Rodin's *Burghers of Calais* occupy a far larger area than is usual for monumental groups, but these are experimental works, and even they make no attempt to place the figures in a recognizable setting. As for freestanding landscape sculpture, analogous to landscape painting, it is notably absent from every major artistic tradition, Eastern or Western. But by adopting a mode that brings together the principles of sculpture and of painting or drawing, the artist in relief is able not only to combine sculptural form with illusionistic space, but to use all the explicitness of the pictorial arts with

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regard to setting. Landscape, buildings, furniture can be given sculptural treatment approximating that of the figures. Relief, in other words, is capable of joining the monumentality of sculpture with the range and flexibility of painting.

I have tried to suggest some possible, and rather obvious, approaches to the study of relief sculpture. Whether any of them would finally justify a detailed study in which relief was made a separate category from sculpture remains problematic. What is clear, however, is that for the nonspecialist an appreciation of relief depends less on the knowledge of its formal principles than on a willingness to appreciate the impulses that lie behind it: most important, perhaps, the impulse to decorate and to tell stories—and the strange aesthetic leap by which the two are made one.

Eloquence in Action

WRITERS AND REVOLUTION. The Fatal Lure of Action. *By Renee Winegarten. New Viewpoints. $12.50.*

Reviewed by ROSEMARY DINNAGE

"And we shall be changed." A dazzling, tempting promise, but one, according to Renee Winegarten, that has more and more dangerously come to confuse spiritual desperation with social possibility. Her aim here is to trace the idea of revolution as it has evolved over the past two hundred years by examining the attitudes of a number of European writers toward it. For the writer, she argues, has the gift of speaking on behalf of his more active co-revolutionaries, who lack his eloquence and self-absorption.

From the time of the French Revolution onward, she believes, the writer has, to an increasing degree, come to be seen as a public man standing at the head of social change, even as a kind of secular priest responsible for his oppressed flock. This can only have been true in countries where active repression and censorship exposed writers to the same kinds

● ROSEMARY DINNAGE works on the staff of the *Times Literary Supplement*. She is a regular contributor to that and to other periodicals and has written books on developmental psychology.

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of dangers as men of action. England has always had too little respect for the intellect and the idea to pay any attention to the harmless enthusiasms of literary men; who among the Englishmen she discusses ever had the remotest effect on public affairs—Shelley? Blake? Lawrence? The journalist-reformer such as Dickens is far more representative of the British tradition. However, this is a minor theme; her major one is not the writer's influence on revolutionary thought and action, but rather his own emotional involvement with them, and the light that this throws on the psychology of revolution. (She uses the word, throughout the book, to mean violent political insurrection.)

In the responses of her chosen writers, from Schiller to Sartre and from Baudelaire to Breton, she finds a great range of motives for revolutionary enthusiasm—generous, self-deluding, revengeful, or compassionate ones. The dual destructive/constructive nature of violent social change can draw upon apparently totally opposed tendencies. On the one hand, we have the reaction of Byron, pursued to the ends of the earth by his self-hatred and malignant boredom, to the Greek cause for which he died: it would give him, he said, "something to *think* of at least." On the other hand, we have Schiller's description of the politically motivated writer: "a noble nature is not content to be itself free; it must also set free everything around it." Between the two lie the fantasies of total regeneration, the need for instant salvation, all the varieties of overt and covert fascination with destruction and violence: Nietszche's "spell of the extreme," Shelley's "tempestuous loveliness of terror," Sartre's "Liberty is Terror."

Miss Winegarten first examines the poets of English Romanticism, tracing the growth and decline of the radical sympathies of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Hazlitt; Shelley's disembodied, religiose revolt against the whole condition of human life; Byron's flight to action as "a refuge from the hated self"; Keats's firm commitment to artistic values above social or political ones. She continues with the less familiar (to American and English readers) political and literary currents of nineteenth-century Europe, from the mock-heroic enthusiasms of Mme de Staël, to the resolute aestheticism of Flaubert and Baudelaire, to the violently opposed positions of Turgenev and Dostoevsky. Finally she considers the attitudes of more recent writers—Gide, Malraux, Camus, and from England, Lawrence and Orwell. She ends with Sartre, the man of words who has rejected literature and forsworn everything but deeds, a "secular John the Baptist announcing the coming of a grim, blood-stained pseudo-redeemer: abstract, authentic, total Man, mythical in his attributes but all too human in his bloody acts."

The author's own firmly committed standpoint is that the ideal of renewal properly belongs only within the personal and spiritual sphere, never the political; she does not argue for reformism but assumes it without question. It would be hard to say whether, for instance, she would consider the events leading to the existence of the United States as justifiable. Her position would seem to be that of Baudelaire: "The cannon thunders, human limbs fly in all directions . . . groans of sacred victims and yells of sacrificial priests are heard. . . . It is Humanity in quest of happiness." Revolution, as reflected in the literary attitudes she has chosen to discuss, is taken only to mean the bloody destruction of civilized values, and always to be a delusive fantasy; there is no consideration of an equally fatal lure of inaction.

Among the many generalizations both implicit and explicit, and within the very wide scope of the book (which would benefit by being trimmed to about half the length), the thread of the main argument tends to get lost. It is not always clear whether Miss Winegarten is affirming in particular that a writer's fascination with political insurrection is important because it is a mirror of the general attitude, or whether she is discussing the special psychology of his ambivalence about action. For the purpose of argument, his reaction must be of interest either because it is widely typical, or because, on the contrary, it is different and unusual. It is understandable, however, that we are sometimes doubtful which of these is Miss Winegarten's drift, for a case could be made out for either.

On the one hand, the writers she discusses cover a spectrum that could be typical of any sensitive and articulate group: from passionate vicarious enthusiasm for a new age (brought into being by someone else),

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through an uneasy ambivalence about the drawbacks of all political action, to decisive ivory tower isolationism. There is no reason to take Sartre or Shelley, for instance, as more typical of the writing man than Flaubert or Keats. On the other hand, the truly intriguing problem lies in the different psychologies of those (writers among them) who have passionate opinions about social revolution, and those who carry them out in action. Miss Winegarten just touches on this in mentioning the writer's frustration at being confined to the slow, passive work of the mind, his loneliness and need for rapid and heroic solutions; but even here he is more like the rest of us than he is like the active revolutionary. To know what causes one man to make a revolution in sensibility or style and another a revolution in government would be of extreme interest. I suspect the two would have almost nothing in common.

Nostalgia Politics

RAGTIME. *By E. L. Doctorow. Random House. $8.95.*

Reviewed by MARTIN GREEN

Over the last few years some very talented writers have appeared with enough new characteristics in common for us to say that we have a new genre, or sub-genre, of fiction. The most striking cases seem to me John Berger's *G*, John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, J. G. Farrell's *The Siege of Vishnapur*, and now E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*. All are historical novels of a new kind. The new genre opens up paths and vistas of promise to other writers, and is recognized by the publishers as the wave of the future. *Ragtime*, for instance, is a quietly sumptuous production, with the author's initials embossed on the cover, and the blurb tells us, "You will never have read anything like *Ragtime* before. Nothing quite like it has ever been written before." That is not true, of course, since it belongs so clearly to this new genre, which is really the most promising development of the last decade or more.

In these books a historical epoch is depicted in great detail. The detail is more selective and eccentric, in some sense more impressionistic, than it was in the traditional historical fiction, but it is authoritative. Derived from a real study of the period, it is truly historical, although the authors take gross liberties with history in the name of art. Notably, they introduce real historical personages whom they then treat just like fictional characters—attributing to them motives and fantasies and even behavior of the most intimate sort. The traditional historical novel treated historical personages as VIPs, filmed from behind, quoted with footnotes, dressed for the ball. In that traditional form, moreover, the point of view was, at least by intention, wholly inside the period depicted, wholly remote from the present time. Another liberty the new novels take is to vary the time perspective trickily; the reader is constantly jolted by phrases and images from later periods, and often from today. The point of view may also be provocatively personal, without the persona being identified. It may be associated with one of the characters (as if he or she was writing the book long after the events narrated) by hints which are never made definite.

Thus the reader is constantly teased to discover the imaginative status of these characters and events—the status and character of the imaginative experience he is being offered. This is what distinguishes the new historical fiction from the old, which even before its decadence, even in the heyday of Scott and Dickens and Thackeray, was a very safe fictional form that involved the reader in fewer imaginative risks than other fictional genres. This difference subsumes others that are more obvious though no less important, like the new novel's use of techniques and materials associated with specifically modern literature—lurid sexual realism and sudden shifts into fantasy and nightmare. The heritage of the modernist revolt in art, of James Joyce and D. H. Lawrence, is now combined with the safe conventions they rebelled against. Perhaps this is like Scott's adaptation of Gothic

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MARTIN GREEN was born in 1927 in England, and is now professor of English at Tufts University. Mr. Green is the author of *Mirror for Anglo-Saxons* and several other books, most recent among them *The Von Richthofen Sisters*. His new book, *Children of the Sun*, about dandyism in England after 1918, will be published in 1976.

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romanticism to safer fictional uses in the old historical novel. In any case, the importance of the new fiction's use of modernist materials and techniques is that they challenge the reader—both generally, to cope with assaults on his rational composure, and specifically, to relate this modernism to the historical period depicted—and that they challenge him in the name of art. This is an aesthetic kind of historical fiction: the writing is notably elegant, and the writer's most necessary qualifications are taste, tact, and erudition.

Of course, these need not preclude intensity of effect, radicalism of commitment, seriousness of adventure. Among the novels named, at least John Berger's *G* seems to me brilliantly radical in every sense—politically, sexually, and in literary technique. Let me take an example of how this works from the first chapter of *G*. We have been shown, in a series of brief dialogues and epigrammatic descriptions, the protagonist's father and mother before his birth—a wildly improbable couple in themselves. Suddenly we find ourselves reading a politico-historical meditation on Garibaldi as an Italian hero. The novel is set after Garibaldi's death, his name has not been mentioned, and there is no conventional link to introduce him. Of course there is an imaginative link: the protagonist's father has been shown to choose his behavior from among the life options offered an Italian male of that time and place, and Garibaldi represents the heroic option—not one Umberto, the father, considers, for he is not interested in heroism, but still an important option within that set. But the point is that this link is not made for us. We have to move imaginatively out of the genre novel into the genre history, out of the fictional character into the historical personage, out of dialogue into political essay, and that subterranean movement of our minds is the imaginative experience the book gives us.

In E. L. Doctorow's novel, Emma Goldman is used very much as Garibaldi is in Berger's. *Ragtime* is in many ways comparable with *G*, because both are set in the period just before World War I; both make it clear that their political sympathies are revolutionary and yet use rich and privileged protagonists; both spend time on aviation and comparable aspects of the technology of the times—all this besides sharing the genre's commitment to the boldly sexual and the elegantly formal. It is inevitable that we should put the two books side by side in our minds, and it seems to me inevitable that when we do so we should see something wrong with the Doctorow.

What is wrong with the book seems to be locatable in two large elements, its nostalgia for the period and its revolutionary politics, and the relation between them. The nostalgia is of course playful and ironic and sophisticated, but that is the nature of nostalgia; its force is not in the least mitigated or deflected thereby. The reader (and the writer) simply wallows in the solid ample furniture and clothes, the wallpaper and the staircases, the motorcars and corsets and hair styles, the street scenes, the music, the oratorical styles, the social types of the period, and so on. The characters are seen essentially in terms of their accessories, and although they are real enough in other ways, notably in their sexual behavior, I think we feel toward them as toward actors—stage actors and actors in our fantasies. We feel that luxury of appreciation which comes when we dress figures up and then undress them again. It is notable how the author lingers on scenes of sumptuous wealth. The scenes of poor and uncomfortable life are shorter, and anyway the squalor is transformed into a kind of luxury, the luxury of picturesque historical evocation.

This is something we do not feel in Berger, and in itself it makes the pleasure we take in Doctorow's history somewhat more vulgar. But what is still more disagreeable is the conjunction of this candy-sucking comfortableness of nostalgia with a radical severity of judgment on the characters. The characterization of Coalhouse Walker, the black revolutionary, and Sarah, his martyred wife, is uncritically romantic; while within the white family at the center of the novel the author's sympathies are awarded lavishly to Younger Brother, because he is vaguely rebellious, and most niggardly to Father, because he is a businessman and explorer and head of the family. This division and determination of sympathies becomes most objectionable in the treatment of Mother, who is given every accolade—apparently on the twin grounds of being all woman and of being able to see

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through Father. In the treatment of Mother and of Tateh, a socialist immigrant who finally replaces Father in Mother's bed, the radicalism seems to reveal itself as artificial or shallow. Tateh gives up his political convictions and becomes a successful filmmaker without forfeiting any of the author's esteem; while Father, who does something for the oppressed, and is ready to risk his life in action for Coalhouse, is denied all esteem. And Younger Brother, the "passionately sullen," as we are often told, is painted with a blurred halo of heavy-breathing enthusiasm just because of his extremism.

In itself the radicalism is, therefore, unsatisfactory. But in conjunction with the nostalgia, it surely means that we are being invited to put ourselves on the side of revolutionaries, to give ourselves the airs of revolutionaries, in purely fantasy and wish-fulfillment conditions —as part of a voluptuous dream. And this seems to me confirmed by the whimsicality of much of the writing: naming a character Younger Brother, for instance, and re-introducing another in disguise—Tateh reappears as Baron Ashkenazy, sporting dyed hair, a skipping step, and a rectangular glass through which he looks at everyone to visualize them on the screen. This whimsy is to be found in the structural motifs of the story, too. On page 9 the Boy looks at himself in the headlights of Houdini's car and says "Warn the Duke," a phrase which has no meaning then. On page 87 Houdini meets the Archduke Franz Ferdinand. And on page 267 Houdini is hanging upside down over Times Square and, having read of the Archduke's assassination, has a mystical vision of the Boy's face reflected in a car's headlight. This, it seems to me, is merest whimsy. It cannot serve serious imaginative interests.

That sequence of images would, of course, work better in a movie, where visual images can carry a greater burden of significance. And there is much in Doctorow's novel that suggests not only movies in general, but one particular kind of movie. Tateh's daughter, for instance, unnamed and unspeaking and effectively unmoving, is presented to us in a series of widely different costumes and backgrounds, always perfectly and mysteriously beautiful. Coalhouse's wife, also beautiful, is

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also presented in a series of extreme postures and situations, absolutely from the outside. Surely such figures, together with the tricky use of time and point of view and the lavish indulgence in nostalgia, suggest Fellini. And at the end we see Tateh planning a series of films about the three children of the novel, as a gang of ragamuffins symbolizing America—a very Felliniesque climax.

These are the things that are wrong with Doctorow's book, and they are dangers obviously inherent in the genre. Where taste and tact and erudition are the virtues cultivated, whimsicality, nostalgia, and fake radicalism are likely to be the artist's nemesis. The strengths of *Ragtime* are most apparent in the central anecdote, about Coalhouse Walker and his seizure of J. P. Morgan's art treasury and his readiness to blow it up with his gang inside it. This is a marvelous story and very well told (perhaps it is significant that this is much more simply told than the rest of the book), and its manifold symbolic resonances for our history are all strengthened by the fictionalization. And there is much more to praise, notably the conjunction of the three families—WASP, black, and immigrant—and their ingenious interlinking.

One must be severe in judging the book, partly because of the talent it displays, which sets itself high standards, and partly because of the high standards congenital to the genre. When one mentions Fellini in connection with literature, one thinks of Nabokov. "Taste, tact, and erudition"—who else has made so much of those in literature? And in fact there is one novel of Nabokov's, the early Russian-language novel *The Gift,* that sets up several of the same problems or tasks as the above-mentioned works of Doctorow, Berger, Farrell, and Fowles. For instance, one large section of *The Gift* is a biography of Chernyshevsky written by the novel's protagonist, a Russian aesthete living in Berlin for whom Chernyshevsky represents all that is most philistine in the social-conscience sensibility of his *émigré* compatriots. The biography is written mockingly and ironically, by no means without sympathy for its subject, but allowing itself every liberty in its treatment of him. (In real life, in the newspaper-serial publication of *The Gift,* as within the action of the novel, this biography raised a scandal.) There is another section describing the protagonist's father's adventures in Manchuria, into which the protagonist gradually intrudes as a participant, only later to confess that this was his fantasy. *The Gift* is not a historical novel, but it employs some of the new genre's key techniques, and is both more brilliant and more serious than any of the recent group except Berger's *G.* Nabokov's kind of seriousness is of course quite different from Berger's. Nabokov is serious about the problems of being an artist, and therefore not serious about politics and eroticism. His protagonist's playfulness with Chernyshevsky (in some sense a cultural father-figure), and with his own father, is in the service of his own serious self-definition. It is Doctorow's misfortune, it seems to me, that he attempted Berger's kind of seriousness, though Nabokov's might have been more natural for him.

The most interesting aspect of all this is the matter of the new genre that is emerging today. As evidence of it, consider how different are other striking historical novels of the last decade or so. John Barth's *The Sot-Weed Factor,* an all-out attack on the reader, does not make elegance a major objective. Anthony Burgess's *Nothing Like the Sun* is a single-minded impersonation of Shakespeare, without the constant play of change in point of view. Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* absorbs its elements of history into a *Gestalt* of fantasy. Each of these three proceeds from quite encyclopedic knowledge of the period it depicts, but in various ways each is a tour de force that calls attention to the writer's prodigious gifts and offers itself as unrepeatable. (Whether it is, is not the point; even if the next twenty years give us a series of such novels—and none of them opens paths for other writers—the character of the two kinds would be unchanged.) For this reason, these other works seem to surround the main group like a scattering of shot around a generic bull's eye.

Could this become a genre in the sense the old historical novel was? At first thought, this seems unlikely, because genre involves some power to attract and shape many talents by the promise of rich rewards. Some of those rewards must lie in society's keeping, and it seems unlikely that work sponsored by Nabokov, as contrasted with Scott, could be gener-

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ally popular. Surely it must always be caviar to the general public. But a moment's reflection reminds one how often it is caviar (or fake caviar) that the general public likes, and how often bread is the preference of a period's *aristos*. What can be more safely said is that the problems and pitfalls of the practitioners of the genre will be those of taste, tact, and erudition. The writers will have to manifest those qualities in more and more exquisite form, and then have to face the reproach of failing in sincerity, simplicity, and passion.

Give Them the Simple Life

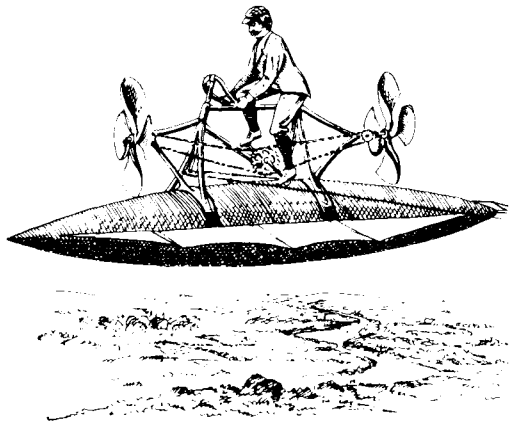
THE SHAKER IMAGE. 200 black-and-white photographs. *Elmer R. Pearson, picture editor; text by Julia Neal. Foreword by Walter Muir Whitehill. Captions by Amy Bess Miller and John H. Ott. New York Graphic Society in collaboration with Shaker Community, Inc. $14.95.*

Reviewed by FREDERIC V. GRUNFELD

Having recently returned from an encampment of a thousand naked, ash-smeared sadhus on the banks of the Ganges, I was both intrigued and delighted by this pictorial history of a peculiarly Western solution to the problem of personal salvation—the Shaker way, as it were. For once, this is a book not about Shaker artifacts—those magnificently simple chairs and other examples of minimal art that now repose in museums—but about the people themselves and how they looked to the tintype photographers of the nineteenth century.

Collected by Elmer R. Pearson of the Illinois Institute of Technology, the pictures provide remarkably intimate close-ups of these dedicated men and women who practiced complete equality between the sexes and between races, held all their goods in common, and were firmly committed to a life

FREDERIC V. GRUNFELD is roving editor of *Horizon* magazine, and writes frequently on music, primitive art, and cultural history. His most recent book is *The Hitler File*, a social history of Germany and the Nazis, 1918–1945. Formerly a neighbor of the last active Shaker community in Massachusetts, he now makes his home in a village on the island of Mallorca.



The Obsolete Necessity

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without sex. "We are celibates—monks and nuns without bolts and bars," Elder Frederick Evans explained. I see severity tempered by kindness in many of the women's faces, a rather disquieting uptightness in the men's. They held that "the marriage of the flesh is a covenant with death and an agreement with hell," yet they also believed in the devotional sanctity of singing and dancing. " 'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free," they sang. " 'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be."

Descriptions of their rituals (which were never photographed) sound as though they had independently invented Sufi dancing: " . . . while marching in the circle, suddenly the Elders whirled around and were marching in the opposite direction between the circles giving out love." Indeed, I rather suspect that the Sufi and Shaker dance impulses can ultimately be traced to a common Middle Eastern source, though by a circuitous route. The Shaker sect, originally called the Prophets, with the characteristic "agitation of the body" that led to their rechristening, sprang up about 1690 in the Cévennes, a mountainous region on the southern slope of the French Massif Central. The dance tradition of southern France is descended from the same Dionysian dances, introduced by Greek colonists, that still persist (in duly catholicized form) among the *sardana*-dancing Catalans and elsewhere in the Pyrenees. The Shakers suppressed the sexual content of these fertility rites, however, and channeled their libido into the production of goods instead.

These 200 old photographs show them as an unremittingly industrious people, forever spinning and weaving (not for them the parable of the lilies of the field), distilling herbal medicines, making tools and furniture, sewing cloaks, breeding livestock. Every member of the Shaker community, even the Elders, worked assiduously at his or her specialty, "some in weaving cloth, some in preserving fruit, some in distilling essences, some in making fans and knick-knacks," as an observer noted in the 1860s. "Maple syrup is an article for which they have a good demand; they make rose water, cherry water, peach water; they sew, they sing. . . ." In time they became known for a veritable Sears-Roebuck range of products with which they supported themselves in eighteen villages, chiefly in New England and upper New York State, but also in Kentucky, Ohio, and Indiana. His Grace the Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach, writing about his visit to America in the 1820s, mentions that he found them selling wooden utensils, sieves, brushes, harnesses, table linen, silver writing pens, and rose water. Later their *Products of Intelligence and Diligence* (as the Shaker catalog was entitled) came to include baskets, boxes, brooms, knitted garments, blankets, cordage, woolen cloth, fans, straw bonnets, bread, butter, cheese, cream, applesauce packed in buckets of white wood, herbs, sweets, chairs, farm equipment, wagons, carriages, braided horse whips, carpeting, and ladies' cloaks. "Each person labored daily at his particular craft or skill, for the common good," writes Julia Neal in her introductory text; and because they all worked, they were quick to appreciate the value of labor-saving devices and to take advantage of the nineteenth-century revolution in mechanical engineering. They were not handicraft cultists, after all, but producers of reliable merchandise. They are credited with having invented, among other things, the rotary harrow, the threshing machine, the buzz saw, the pea sheller, the sliding-weight balance, and the common clothespin.

By their works ye shall know them. "From the beginning the Shakers equated work and worship," Julia Neal writes. "Good business was good religion. Poor workmanship and dishonest dealing were not tolerated." As two of the Eldresses of the Mount Lebanon community expressed it, the Shaker "neither cheats nor means to let himself be cheated, prefers to give more than the contract demands, [and] glories in keeping the top, middle, and bottom layer equally good in every basket and barrel of fruit or vegetables sent to market under his name."

The products of this "consecrated ingenuity" were models of functionalism and simplicity. Surely America never produced more beautiful furniture than the beds from Pleasant Hill or the chairs from Sabbathday Lake. "We find out by trial what is best, and when we have found a good thing we stick to it," the designers explained. Mr. Pearson's

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collection of pictures lets us see the chairs, not in splendid isolation as exhibits at the Museum of Modern Art, but in their native habitat, in meetinghouses and at peace-mongering gatherings. The architecture documented in this book is also wholly admirable: spacious, airy, and "plain as a plank," in the words of Hepworth Dixon, an English editor who visited the New Lebanon meetinghouse in the 1860s. But their most remarkable buildings were the dairy barns, gristmills, and storehouses "of singular size and happy contrivance," as Dixon noted. "The granary is to a Shaker what the temple was to the Jew."[2]

I was fascinated by these old photographs and daguerreotypes, but I also found it difficult to suppress a slight shudder. Walter Benjamin, in his unfinished book on nineteenth-century France, wrote about the *Fetisch Ware*, the cult of the salable commodity, as one of the great spiritual ailments of the capitalist ethic. Yet here among the Shakers, with their communism and egalitarianism, the path of salvation led to precisely the same objective—the production of more goods—and was not so far removed, for that matter, from the ethic of Blake's satanic mills. If Benjamin had examined the Shaker experience, would he have realized that the whole Marxist emphasis on the means of production is part and parcel of this same *Fetisch Ware*, the final *reductio ad absurdum* of Max Weber's Protestant ethic? There is a tendency now to regard the Shakers (like the Kwakiutl) as having created, at least in some respects, the model for the Utopian crafts commune of the future. In fact, with very little strain on the imagination, one can imagine them attired in utility-blue Mao jackets, practicing, if not outright celibacy, then a very discreet and late-blooming sex life—no public kissing or hand holding. In any event, the commune would still stress neatness, discipline, and *production*. Visitors from the outside world would send back the same glowing reports they wrote about the Shakers:

> The great rule of domestic economy, a place for everything and everything in its place, is no where more strikingly exemplified . . . and tho' they make no pretensions to the fine arts, and have little

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of what is called taste, yet all their arrangements and the products of their labor exhibit the proofs of thoroughness, permanency, utility, and substantial comfort.

There was also the matter of cleanliness. "I never saw any place so exquisitely clean," wrote an Englishwoman about a Shaker meetinghouse in the 1830s. New Lebanon, New York, became known as a community where "not a chip was astray, not a log awry," and at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, in the 1850s, "the stones of the walls look as exemplary as if every one had been catechised and wiped clean with the corner of an apron." Even the road running through the village had "not a stone bigger than a walnut upon it." For all their gift for simplicity, they sound and look rather like a lot of anal retentives washing and ironing their compulsive way to Nirvana. It was hardly surprising that the women who inhabited these spotless villages "turned in their toes and elbows as if carefully taught to be ungraceful," and the males "were in general a harsh forbidding set of men, with a peculiar solemn, gloomy, ascetic, and rather stolid expression of countenance."

My thanks to the authors, in any case, for bringing together such an enlightening view of industrial mysticism. I have seen the future and know, or at least suspect, that it is going to work. Look at that Shaker lunch of sixteen items for twenty-five cents (my typewriter doesn't even have a cents sign on it, for God's sake)!

Mishima in Microcosm

DEATH IN MIDSUMMER AND OTHER STORIES. *By Yukio Mishima. New Directions. Paper, $2.25.*

Reviewed by BARBARA WOLF

It would be a pity if Donald Keene should not write a biography of Mishima, since Keene is the one major Western commentator interested in keeping the author's work, his life, and his death in due perspective. In recent years, being a suicide, like being of a racial or sexual "minority," has become fraught with critical mystique and public fascination. No wonder, then, since Mishima fits all these categories, that his accomplishment as a writer has been lost sight of in the clamor about his life and death.

But as Keene observed in *Landscapes and Portraits,* the ultimate question to be posed about Mishima is the same one that should be asked about any author: "What makes his works good?" John Nathan and Henry Scott-Stokes, in two recent biographies, tend to forget that ultimate question, and to forget that it was not Mishima's life that made his writing important, but the reverse. Nathan's *Mishima: A Biography* (Little, Brown, 1974) offers a portrait of the artist as sexual psychopath and ranting demagogue. Like a prosecuting attorney, Nathan presents only the incriminating evidence; since most of what Mishima actually wrote is irrelevant to Nathan's thesis, it is either distorted to fit or not discussed at all. Scott-Stokes's *The Life and Death of Yukio Mishima* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1974) is far more objective in tone and examines all major works. But by opening with a long and harrowing description of the seppuku, he establishes a morbid context of suspense, which makes Mishima's writings seem less significant as literature than as clues in a mystery thriller.

For those interested in learning about Mishima, the best place to start is still with his own writing. Yet because of his virtuosity, no one or two major works adequately represent him. Therefore, the most practical approach is through his short fiction. *Death in Midsummer and Other Stories* was selected and translated under Mishima's own supervision in 1966, five years before his death. The volume contains ten pieces, very diverse in subject and manner, yet unified by the author's mind. *Death in Midsummer* is almost a microcosm of Mishima's whole work, representing most of his major styles except for the polemic and the directly confessional. Together, the stories suggest both where he was broad in his concerns and limited by his obsessions.

Death in Midsummer must be surprising to those familiar with Mishima only through

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BARBARA WOLF has published in *Japan Quarterly,* the *Nation,* the *Yale Review,* and elsewhere, and is currently teaching at the University of San Francisco and at Foothill College.

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headlines. The title story, which opens the collection, is quite unrelated to nationalism, fascism, homosexuality, or seppuku. Rather, it is an elegy on the death of the innocent, and a study of the psychology of mourning. The main character, Tomoko, is the mother of two young children who are drowned in a commonplace incident at a resort. Mishima's method is one with many affinities but no equivalents. The narration is a controlled Tolstoyan analysis, phase by phase, of his character's evolving perceptions, proceeding to an epiphany that is left as ambiguous as a Zen koan or haiku, and that is therefore utterly *un*-Tolstoyan. There is also something rather like Poe or Dostoevsky in the extraordinary lucidity of the descriptions, coupled with the intense hysteria of the passions described. Yet although the passions are hysterical, the person who suffers them is fundamentally sound, and not at all like a character out of Dostoevsky or Poe. Tomoko's irrational state is simply normal for one in her circumstances.

In "Death in Midsummer," the whole process of mourning is described as an unfolding of ironies and contradictions. Tomoko's grief is both hysterical and normal. Her recovery, which she feels is shameful, is perfectly natural. Her quest for meaning is both inevitable and futile. And to enrich the irony, the narrator places her ordeal in cosmic perspective: the children, who mean so much to their mother, mean nothing to Nature; they are swept away by a chance wave and not a sign is left on ocean, beach, or sky. The grief, the shame, the hunger for meaning, all define Tomoko as human; yet all are as irrational and futile as they are unavoidable. Tomoko's personal loss confronts her with something even more terrible: the void itself. Yet despite the void, as despite her grief, she goes on living, protected from destruction by the limitations of her intelligence, limitations not merely specific to her but essential to the species.

For all their outward diversity, the majority of Mishima's sympathetic characters come down to a type much like Tomoko: an individual entranced by inner conflicts, isolated from an exterior world as unconsciously cruel as it is beautiful. Yet it is the diversity that is more immediately obvious. At first sight, few

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works would seem less alike than "Death in Midsummer," with its bourgeois setting, chaste tone, and unsophisticated protagonist, and so extravagant a period piece as "The Priest of Shiga Temple and His Love." Yet the latter piece too is ultimately reducible to a series of internal perceptions and riddling contradictions.

The story is told in prose of great elaborateness and beauty. An aged monk of famed sanctity falls in love at first sight with a Grand Concubine from the Heian court. Just as his whole life to that point has represented the renunciation of this world for the next, hers has represented the empty enjoyment of the present:

> The Great Priest was not young enough . . . to believe that this new feeling was simply a trick that his flesh had played on him. . . . [She] was nothing other than the present world, which until then had been in repose. . . . It was as if he had been standing by the highway . . . with his hands firmly covering his ears, and had watched two great oxcarts rumble past each other. All of a sudden he had removed his hands. . . .

But her response works at cross-purposes to his; as he seeks this world through her, she seeks the next through him. When they finally meet, it is in silence and tears. They feel some enormous event has occurred, but what it is is never made explicit, and no doubt it differs for each character, as it does for each reader. Religion and sensuality are both—and perhaps equally—triumphs of the spirit and follies of the flesh; but above all they are achievements and also deceptions of the imagination. Therefore, Mishima makes the Grand Priest's meeting with his love at once a consummation and an anticlimax, and as solitary an event as his return to his monastic cell.

For in "The Priest and His Love," as in "Death in Midsummer," the great struggles of the characters are not so much internalized as fundamentally internal. The characters live in worlds subjective to the point of isolation. Unable to share either values or feelings, they have nothing to go on but their own impulses and intuitions. Inner states may be set off by something outside the self, like the death of the children or the first glimpse of the Grand Concubine; but from that point on they assume an autonomous life and logic. The *moment* in Mishima tends to have such enormous consequences, because it so often represents a forced awakening from an innocence that is really a kind of unreflecting solipsism. In "Death in Midsummer," Tomoko is literally napping at the moment her children drown; and the Great Priest has figuratively closed his senses to the present world.

Toshiko, heroine of the brief but powerful "Swaddling Clothes," suffers a very similar awakening. When a low-ranking servant in her household unexpectedly gives birth to an illegitimate child, wealthy young Toshiko is shocked into pity and a kind of responsibility. She is aware for the first time of the injustice of the social order, and foresees a time when the despised infant must take revenge against her own pampered baby. This awakening, however, leads to nothing practical. Rather than offering material help, she is impelled toward a masochistic expiation. Deliberately going into the park at night, she invites assault by a young vagrant whom she identifies with the person the newborn outcast must become. Toshiko's sacrifice is both symbolically appropriate and fundamentally hysterical, a psychotic *acting out* rather than a purposeful *act*. Like that of Dostoevsky, and of Tolstoy in his last phase, Mishima's power seems largely a product of his own desperate sincerity, which is of a kind that can find no outlet in the world of action. Such passion creates grand, symbolic gestures, and characters and situations that seem to demand them—in art if not in life.

Yet intense as they are, Mishima's sympathetic characters live in constant doubt as to their sincerity and are continually challenging it. The Great Priest gambles his hope of paradise. Toshiko seeks out the tramp in the park. Tomoko revisits the scene of her babies' death. Sometimes a character will arrive at such a test and then refuse it. Kiyoko, the heroine of "Dojoji," intends to mutilate her lovely face in homage to her dead lover. At the very last instant she changes her mind and decides on a career of amoral pleasure-seeking. Mishima's attitude toward her seems ambivalent. The closing lines convey a Nirvanic liberation: warned that she will "end

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up no longer able to feel," Kiyoko buoyantly replies that so long as her face is unchanged, nothing else matters. In "Dojoji," passionate commitment is equated with suffering and self-mutilation, while the heartless beauty of art, Nature, and utterly selfish people is offered as a principle of joy. Yet to achieve her liberation, Kiyoko must destroy her capacity for emotion.

The incompatibility of emotion and aesthetic beauty is one of the several themes of "Onnagata." The drama critic, Masuyama, is fascinated by the art of the Kabuki female impersonator, Mangiku. Mangiku's femininity is greater than any woman's, just as his theatrical roles are more grandly passionate than life. But his only place is on stage, in that bastard world "born of the illicit union between dream and reality." When Mangiku takes his impersonation out of the theater and into the real world, he immediately disgraces himself and disillusions Masuyama.

With one exception, the rest of the stories in *Death in Midsummer* satirize the contemporary scene. "The Pearl" describes a club of housewives with nothing to do but manipulate each other. "The Three Million Yen" tells how a young married couple saves for middle-class possessions by giving sex shows for audiences like the housewives in "The Pearl." "The Seven Bridges" concerns a group of geishas, whose playful approach to a rite of their profession soon exposes their ugly selfishness. "Thermos Bottles" follows a smug businessman through his discovery that his perfect egoism has made him expendable to everyone. These modern types have neither beauty nor feeling to recommend them. They recognize nothing capable of transcending or ennobling the self, except possibly money.

How different from these, almost another species, are the Lieutenant and Reiko in "Patriotism," as poetically idealized as their foils are satirically denigrated. "Patriotism" is an imaginative reconstruction of an actual double suicide performed by a young married couple trapped in a conflict of loyalties during the insurrection of 1936. The work is, in every sense, "highly wrought," a kind of heroic epic, or even opera, in prose. As charged with splendor and glory, with sensuality and death as *Tristan and Isolde*, it expresses the same striving after transcendence. The young

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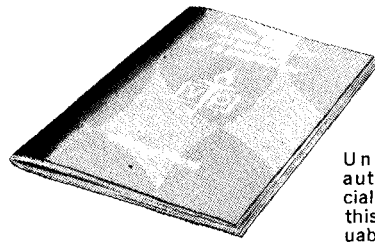

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couple's heedless sincerity endows them with the grandeur of figures in legend; or rather, it almost so endows them. But it is one thing to accept heroic gestures from personages at the dawn of history, acting upon archetypal situations, and another to accept them from twentieth-century persons committed to the wrong side of issues. Ironically, "Patriotism" succeeds for most readers only to the extent that Mishima's stylistic genius overbalances the theme he is apparently celebrating.

Every story in *Death in Midsummer* is rich in ironies, but perhaps the supreme irony is that the martyred lovers of "Patriotism" are the only truly happy characters in the whole volume. They alone are free from both triviality and alienation. They alone are in communion with each other and with the world. Their acceptance of a transcendent principle endows their emotions with beauty and meaning and permits them to live and die both serenely and intensely. Had they martyred themselves to almost any other ideal, it would be easier for liberal readers to sympathize and understand. For what is being celebrated in "Patriotism" is not thirties-style militarism per se, but the self-realizing force of idealism and the bliss of martyrdom. The specific principle is less the cause than the occasion.

Mishima's fiction is fiction, not polemics or propaganda. It is true that a good deal of what he wrote conveys an open or implicit criticism of modern society. True, he traced much of the inauthenticity of modern Japanese society to the rejection of tradition that followed defeat in the Pacific war. It is even true that in his last years he became a spokesman for a kind of right-wing reaction, and ultimately martyred himself for that cause. But it is also true that practically nothing in *Death in Midsummer,* except possibly "Patriotism," reasonably lends itself to a right-wing, or even political, interpretation. And only one story in all ten, "Onnagata," is even remotely concerned with homosexuality. Mishima, of course, did write polemics and confessions, but only on a few occasions did he disguise them as fiction.

That Mishima could conceive no better solution for Japan than to revive its past was less a misfortune for him as an artist than as a man. It so happened that the desperate sincerity, disciplined violence, and paradoxical gentleness of the samurai tradition had affinities with fundamental traits of his own nature: his discipline as artist and athlete, his sadomasochism as a sexual being, his despair as a Japanese, his emotionality as a person. These affinities were destructive to him as a man because they encouraged his tendency to hysteria. But the effect on his work was probably beneficial. Since Mishima universalized his private experience when he wrote, the passions and issues that concerned him personally were rarely allowed to intrude into his fictional universe. Within the limits of his sensibility, he could be an objective and dispassionate artist. Many of his characters do not resemble him at all, but are specimens of types held up for examination. Those in whom he did invest himself are far less likely to share his opinions and habits than his loneliness, his alienation, and his passionate integrity. In other words, the dovetailing of influences that produced hysteria in his life created intensity in his art, just as it did with Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and Poe.

Mishima died attempting a double impossibility: to inspire Japan to reject the present and return to the past, and to make himself over into a man of the past, a samurai. When so futile a gesture is made in life, it can only appear as madness. But when it occurs in art, as in "Swaddling Clothes" or "The Priest and His Love," then it takes on quite another meaning. We seek in art, after all, what we cannot have in a sane life: an unfettered expression of our feelings, wishes, fears, impulses, intentions; a direct confrontation with our human condition in all its madness and cruelty, its contradictions and tragic joys. Mishima declared that he wished to make a poem of his own life. That aspiration is the great romantic quest after the impossible, which in life must always lead to destruction but which is the source of the sublime in art. As an artist, Mishima may have been limited by his own obsessions, but he still gives a great deal of what we go to literature for. Because he kept his own opinions out, his characters and their situations transcend the time and place of their creation. Compared to that accomplishment, the success or failure of the rest of his life must fade into its relative insignificance.

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The Reader Replies

THE READER REPLIES *carries miscellaneous comments by readers and authors on various articles that have appeared in the magazine. All communications should be addressed to: Editor,* THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, *1811 Q Street, N. W., Washington, D. C. 20009. Because of space limitations we cannot guarantee to print all letters received.*

—EDITOR

A Literary Mafia?

It is certainly surprising to find my polemical essay on literary politics in America, *The End of Intelligent Writing,* reviewed not by an identifiable writer but by a pseudonym (Spring 1975). And this pseudonym, "Aristides," attempts to refute my contentions not with contrary evidence but, simply, an unsubstantiated proclamation, based on little more than personal (*sic*) authority, that my contentions are false. A secret name to defend the literary world from charges of secret dealings! Who is kidding (conning?) whom?

Aristides' summary of my book is so blatantly erroneous that one questions how carefully he (she?) read it. A passing admission ("a work that . . . is being accorded the silent treatment") suggests that the reviewer thinks of himself as writing for an audience that has not examined the book and thus will not be able to dispute his gross misrepresentations:

1. He suggests that I see the "literary mafia" as the sole cause of literary suppression in America, whereas I actually identify its machinations as one of three principal problems, the other two being "the literary-industrial complex" and pervasive philistinism. The *confluence* of causes is the primary theme of the book.

2. He charges me with ignoring the quarrels among the literary mafia's "dons," to quote his charming term; but the book acknowledges such disputes, though minimizing them. My point is actually this: Though literary mobsters, not unlike other gangsters, may quarrel with each other, these differences are suppressed in protecting their common interests and in their dealings with the outside world.

3. Aristides says, "Mr. Kostelanetz contends there is a straight line of progress in the arts, pushing consciousness ever forward, ever onward and inward." Nowhere can he find me subscribing to that contention, though I do say that change in art is beneficial, for psycho-sociological reasons; but that belief, as any scrupulous reader should know, is scarcely the same as the myth of progress. Having charged me with neglecting a theme that was indeed in the book, Aristides then invents one that wasn't. Students who read inaccurately are customarily flunked. Should cultural magazines have different standards for reviewers?

4. Aristides says I fail to "criticize or even discuss . . . the quality of politics of literary mobsters." On page 49 of *The End of Intelligent Writing,* I speak of mob political criticism as concentrating "more upon negative critiques of America and modern society than upon articulating any positive ideology or comprehensive visions of change." On page 116, I wrote: "The *New York Review*'s constant coverage of the Chicago Seven and other political show trials represents a circuitous type of radicalism which appears to be based not upon criticism of social inequity or the advocacy of revolution, but rather a sentimental sympathy with the 'civil disobedience' of personally estimable revolutionaries, coupled with a distaste for their prosecutors. Though the conflict between them is scarcely the central injustice, the dramatization of it facilely elicits melodramatic emotions." Where was Aristides' mind when (if?) these passages crossed his eyes?

5. Aristides: "The fact is that just as the avant-garde is by now an honored tradition in America, so is the tradition of wanting youth on its side." If the first were as true as he suggests, why, pray tell, is it that experimental writing in the U.S. is *not* commercially published, is *never* prominently reviewed, and is *never* accorded "establishment" recognition? Why is it that a magazine with Phi Beta Kappa's prestige rarely, if ever, publishes serious critical articles on genuinely experimental literature? One theme of my book is that the forward-looking kind of intelligence that informs criticism of the visual arts rarely appears in literary pages. Another theme, supported with elaborate evidence, holds that the "adoration of the young" is, especially in the literary world, an old-boy

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myth, a polemical invention, often uttered in shameless disregard of the truth (or the speaker's powerful position).

Typically, in dealing with my support of visual poetry, Aristides speaks of "concrete poetry," an epithet rarely used anymore by practitioners, and never used by me. Aristides contends that its "virtues . . . are not, to put it gently, highly evident." That is a glib put-down, not considered criticism, although typical, alas, of the kind of pious disdain accorded avant-garde writing in prominent U.S. literary journals. Were it true that, as Aristides says, "the tradition of the avant-garde, of modernism, is the established order of the day," readers of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR would see such vulgarly glib put-downs directed not at experimental writers but at W. H. Auden, Saul Bellow, and Lionel Trilling, among other conservative dieties. Instead, Aristides' comment exemplifies the double standard, elaborately exposed in *The End,* of prejudicially lowering the level of critical discourse in discussing avant-garde art. Some reviewers, even in THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR, are apparently uneducable.

This pseudonym business still bothers me. On page 190, Aristides describes a purportedly typical literary career: "A writer who is not primarily a novelist or a poet begins with book reviews, going on to essays and articles, working his way up to books, gaining his education all the while in public (or in print). Connections are made along the way —once more as in business. The former supplicant, who requested to take on things, is eventually supplicated to: asker becomes asked." On second thought, however, this is scarcely typical; it describes only a sort of literary journalist who, after appeasing the powers-that-be, climbs into an editorial seat. It describes, behold, the career of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR's illustrious new editor, Joseph Epstein (b. 1937), whom I would venture dollars to donuts is "Aristides" (which is also Greek for Epstein).

But why, pray tell, does *he* want to discredit THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR with the cover of a pseudonym?

RICHARD KOSTELANETZ
New York, New York

ARISTIDES replies: Triumph rather than truth being the object of so much correspondence appearing in intellectual journals, I have for some time secretly longed to enjoy the spectacle of a writer, having been accused of mischievous misinterpretation and playing loose with facts, come clean and admit that he was altogether wrong in what he wrote. Along with this admission, he would go on to say that, as penance, he pledges never to write another word; and to show his earnestness he would enclose a receipt for the sale of his desk and typewriter.

Alas, Mr. Kostelanetz's letter does not provide the proper occasion for such a spectacle. It does not because Mr. Kostelanetz, despite his disclaimers, his accusation of my "blatantly erroneous summary" of his book, the sentences that he quotes in his own behalf, nonetheless reveals his true method in the last paragraph of his letter, where he refers to "a sort of literary journalist who, after appeasing the powers-that-be, climbs into an editorial seat." What Mr. Kostelanetz is saying here is that the editor of THE AMERICAN SCHOLAR came to his job only because he put in a long apprenticeship kissing, to put the matter politely, the hems of other men's skirts. This is wonderfully characteristic of *The End of Intelligent Writing,* which, whatever claims its author might make for it here, is dominated by an obsession with literary deals, conspiracies, and general corruption. As I hope I have made clear in my column, it will not wash. Although in his book, and now in his letter, Mr. Kostelanetz wishes to give the impression that he writes in the boiling blood of outrage at the enemies of literature in our time, both the book and the letter can, I think, be more accurately described as having been written in the juice of his own sour grapes.

Sex and the Professors

I have just read "Sex and the Professors" (Summer 1975), and I think that I am in love with Aristides. His understanding of the importance of academic power, interdisciplinary studies, and the new dimension of academic freedom has endeared him to me forever. Besides, I didn't know all that about Socrates.

By unavoidably memorizing his best lines, however, I almost missed his main thrust; that the loving relationship of teacher and student transcends earthly delights. Would he say this is true for female as well as for male professors? I sensed a certain narrowness (notice my careful avoidance of the cliché "chauvinistic") in his approach that troubles me.

As a female professor I couldn't help wishing, for example, that some of that good stuff had come my way. The only reason a male student has ever closed the door behind him in my office is because he hasn't wanted anyone to hear the bawling out he was going to get for his lousy paper on The American Dream. Perhaps I haven't devoted enough time to the development of my seductive powers in the classroom. But I've been too busy teaching. When I think of all I've been

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missing—all that blurring of lines in bed (Aristides does have a way with words!)—I get a little sick.

Now I have a request. Inasmuch as I'm now close to retirement (in my forties) and clearly too old for any kind of aphrodisiac appetite, I'm not asking this for myself but for my sisters—all those young, hot-blooded girls who will follow in my footsteps, inevitably to become disillusioned unless Aristides can save them. Would you please, dear Aristides, write another treatise on Sex and the Female Professor—think of the instant status such a title alone might give us! And do it because I love you.

Marcia Conner
Dickinson College
Carlisle, Pennsylvania

* * *

As the author of one of the "academic novels" treated with such elevation and refinement in Aristides' essay in the Summer issue, let me not only applaud the sentiment (that profs and coeds cuddle—like Socrates and Alcibiades—but not, well, let the reader choose his own verb) but publicly repent. Readers of the trenchant essay hope the author will follow it up with others on, say, those eighteenth century novels in which lubricious rakes seduce young women of virtue, the Russian fiction of the last century which glamorizes the adulterous filth of the landed gentry, and those earlier French novels which attempt to enchant the reader with the destructive financial and sexual ambitions of the bourgeoisie.

Richard Stern
Chicago, Illinois

Aristides replies: If I read him correctly, and he does not leave much room for misreading, Richard Stern is saying that *Other Men's Daughters*, his novel about the love affair between a professor and a graduate student, is in its theme in the tradition of Fielding, Tolstoy, Stendhal, and Balzac. This is certainly an original notion, and one that, I must confess, had not occurred to me before, and probably would never have occurred to me had Mr. Stern not pointed it out. Now that he has pointed it out, however, I hope he will excuse my telling him that I find it laughable.

The Despairing Optimist

Tyrone Guthrie once remarked that no river in the whole wide world was as wide as the East River. In the Autumn 1975 issue of The American Scholar René Dubos remarks that he had lived in Brooklyn near the Brooklyn Bridge. Well and good. But, I wonder if Dr. Dubos ever walked, or cycled along the Brooklyn waterfront adjacent to the Narrows and near the Verazzano Bridge? From Bay Ridge Avenue (69th Street) to Bay Parkway, all along the waterfront, we have, thanks to Bob Moses, a bicycle path, pedestrian path, and unfortunately a motor highway. Every morning, weather permitting, it is my pleasure to cycle along this five miles of waterside pathways. Prevailing winds are from the west. Fumes from the motorway blow away from the promenade and cyclists. When the winds are from the east, no one should be on the shore.

Edith Crawford,
Brooklyn, New York

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Presenting the American Case

I commend Daniel Moynihan's "Presenting the American Case" in the Autumn SCHOLAR to every member of the intellectual and academic community.

What *is* the American Case? The struggle to determine who and what we are goes on, and its outcome is fundamental to the presentation. Are we the military-industrial complex providing the means and the will to burn and maim civilian populations by high-level bombing or are we the humanitarians who help to heal and rehabilitate the injured?

Are we a democratic nation committed to the export of democratic government or are we the supporters of fascist dictators? The nations of the world may simply be telling us "We cannot hear what you say because your actions speak so loud."

In truth, of course, we are all of these things. We supplied tremendous economic aid to rehabilitate the participants of World War II. But since that time our record has been pretty bad.

We helped overthrow the elected government of Chile and now remain the only nation of consequence continuing to support the savagely repressive Chilean military dictatorship.

We supported the Greek government of the Colonels; we continue to support repressive governments in Spain, Brazil, Indonesia, South Korea, and elsewhere. We have supplied "security" consultants to police states committed to torture and terror.

Our international aid programs have been used for political ends: the major share for military purposes and the humanitarian efforts seldom going into the right hands. If "by our friends you may know us" our case is unsavory.

Fortunately there are forces for change at work in our country. The decent people, finally awakened by Watergate, have evinced a new interest in the CIA, the Pentagon, and foreign policy. They are beginning to join the thinking people and the idealistic young people in pressing for reform.

Mr. Moynihan makes the excellent point that the Americans best able to speak for us to the majority of the world's nations, which now espouse national socialism, are "the labor movement and social democrats" who are "aware of the alternatives, and acculturated . . . to the realm of ideology in which the American Case must be presented."

In addition, at this time of national reawakening, the efforts of the academic and intellectual community become critical. With the new public interest pressure groups we have the power to influence official action and to elect representatives who will do our will. With the cooperation of the media the issues are publicized, sharpened, and sustained.

Internally, we must institute planning for human needs rather than corporate gain. We must support the efforts to protect the environment and conserve our resources. We must exercise fiscal responsibility by cutting the overkill expenditures for "defense" rather than by reducing our social services.

Externally, we must stop supporting repressive governments around the world, even if this happens to be contrary to our immediate interest in military bases or the overseas investments of our multi-national corporations. We must not act to repress democracy, liberty, or equality, but give these causes our positive support.

If we do these things we will have solved the problem of Presenting the American Case.

Bassett Ferguson
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia

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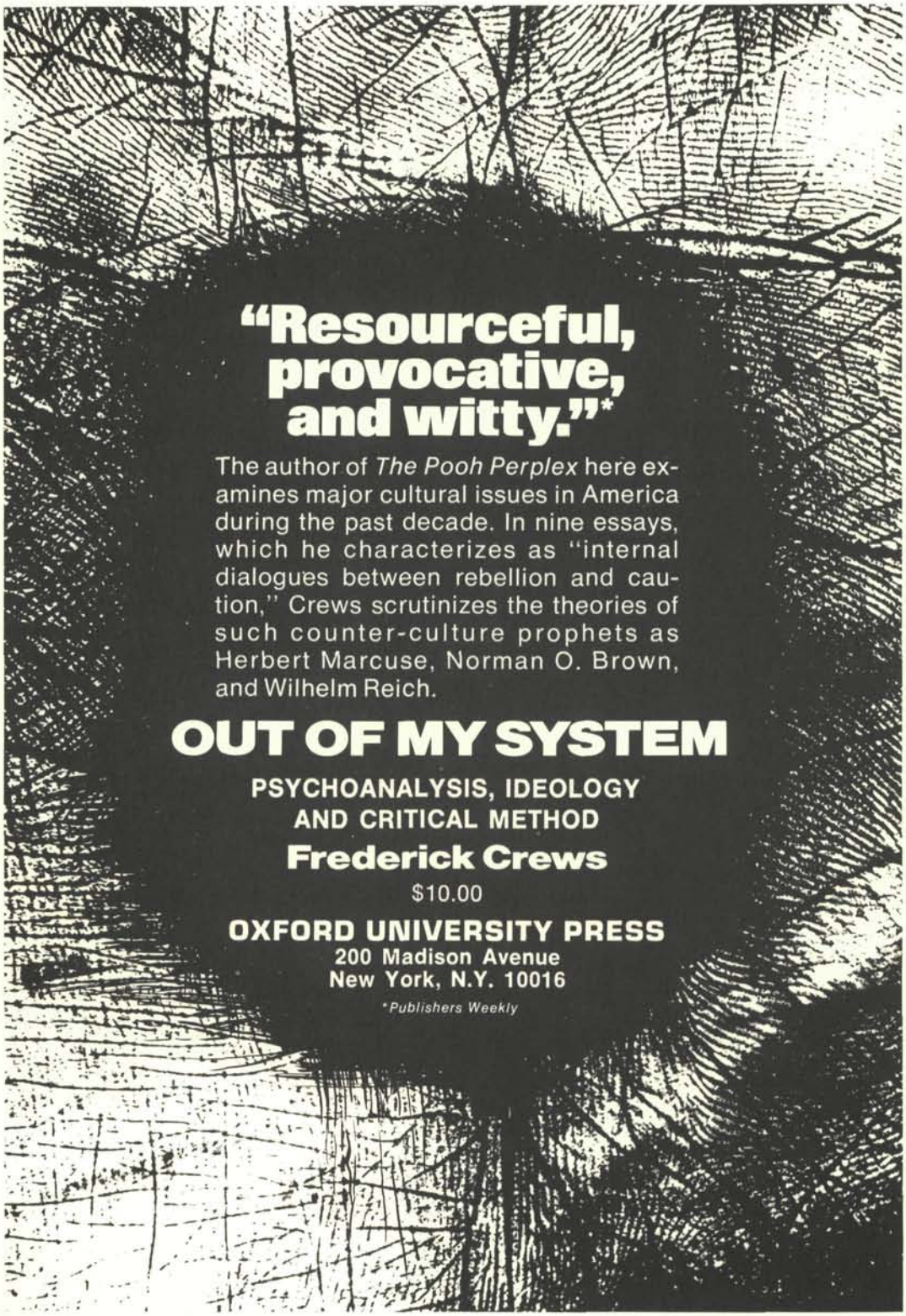

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